

FREEDOM AND ALIENATION

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suitability of causing an offender to suffer, irrespective of any good that this may attain, is not intuitively evident. I think also that telling the truth and keeping of promises, and the like duties, can, though sometimes with difficulty, have their stringency accounted for in utilitarian terms. I feel very certain that the alleged immediate knowledge of other minds claimed by philosophers such as Cook Wilson and R.I. Aaron and by theologians like Martin Buber and his followers is quite unwarranted. I wish my critics could read more carefully what I have written at length about Martin Buber, in this very context, in *The Elusive Mind*, Chapter XIII.

But *at some point* an appeal either to something that is given empirically, or to some other way in which something is seen to be the case, seems unavoidable. In such instances there just is no further argument. Professor Bernard Williams, in a broadcast discussion, said that when people appealed to intuition, or the like, he reached for his analytical gun and suspected his opponent was running out of steam. That is not quite the case, but there is a point where the steam does run out and there is just no more to say. The word 'intuition' has some unfortunate associations, though I have no serious objection to it. I avoid it for the most part, but at some point in our discussion, a point to be reached reluctantly and cautiously, we just have to ask one another whether we do not find that things seem to be in a certain fashion. To rule this out, by contrast with cautioning against too facile an invocation of it, inevitably leads to grave distortions, seeking to account for certain things in limited terms that may not be at all adequate or reasonable. At some point, it appears to me that there must be some things in ethics about which we can only say that this is how they seem to us, the superior inherent worth for instance of some experience, the obligation to help people in distress in certain situations, to further what is good if the facts are as we take them. If I am asked for a reason why pain is bad, and not just something I do not like, what am I expected to say? If asked why I should pull someone back to the kerb to save his being run over, what reply do I give beyond some amplification of the facts if appropriate? But the facts of themselves do not suffice, and there must, it seems to me, at some point be the invocation of what we have professionally called intuition in ethics.

If I am wrong in this it still seems unfair to rule out of court from the start a position which does depend on some kind of immediate awareness at some crucial point. That claim has a distinguished ancestry, and it does rule out further argument at the point in question. Most philosophers recognise the limits of argument somewhere, and we should be patient with one another in deciding just where they should be placed. For some the supplement comes from prevailing fashion or some other naturalistic factor like our own reaction or what is deeply embedded in the ways of our community or in human nature. I consider these to be very uncertain foundations for the sorts of things we are prone to affirm in ethics or religion, or in other nonempirical matters of which there must surely be some. The appeal to immediacy, which we all share as far as we can, should not be taken straight away as a sign of naivety or credulity. In practice it is widespread, and it would seem to be wiser to consider first just how plausible it is in a particular instance. To rule it out at all points from the start is itself seriously dogmatic and simplistic. I should like to

The bewilderment, and the sense of bafflement, which is here induced, come about, it seems to me, by neglect of what Nicolai Hartmann calls 'a plus of determination'. To affirm the effectiveness of our own intentionality we do not have to deny anything that we learn from science about our bodies and the world of nature. We have simply to insist that this is not the whole story, that there are ways (limited ones) in which thoughts and intentions, however extensive their dependence on body, function in their own way and bring another factor to bear on what would otherwise happen. In my comparison below, if a number of players are pushing a ball, then another joining them, though he cannot have it all his own way, makes a difference to the way the ball moves.

It is to the defence of the view all too briefly outlined here that this study is devoted. If we cannot, other than by outright inconsistency, allow the genuineness and efficacy, limited though it is, of thought and purposes, then our lot is indeed sad. To leave it all in the air is to abandon what matters most about consciousness and human existence, and there can be no greater dis-service than that to humanity in its present perplexities and strains. To pay our proper respect to science is not to become the slaves of it. Science does not explain everything – why should it? That is what I have been particularly concerned to stress, in this book and elsewhere.

I have finally to thank two of my friends who greatly assisted me in the preparation of this book for publication. Dom Illtyd Trethowan, of Downside Abbey, read the entire final typescript and made many valuable suggestions, I am likewise deeply indebted (not for the first time) to Dr David Rees, of Jesus College, Oxford, who found time, during a very busy schedule, to read all the proofs and help me to make many corrections and improvements. I am very grateful to them both.

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CHAPTER I

The Elusive Self

In this book I shall be taking for granted much that I have defended at some length elsewhere, especially in the earlier volumes of my Gifford Lectures.¹ But I offer in this first Chapter a summary, with some new emphases, of what I have said earlier about persons and their identity.

I start with a point which I state very bluntly, for I have presented it many times; it is that there is a radical difference of nature between mental events and physical ones, however closely they may affect one another. I have various experiences at the moment, so-called bodily sensations, perceptions, the course of the thoughts I am now putting on paper. I sustain my intention to do all that I do. None of this is physical. It happens through a particular time, however measured, but none of it is itself extended. Such occurrences are also conditioned, in the experience we know, by physical states and processes. I see what I do see because my eye is affected in certain ways and the change 'relayed' to the brain. Changes in my brain are also involved in the course of my thoughts. If my brain were deranged, or indeed subject to a very small malfunctioning, I would not be following the present course of my thoughts. But this conditioning is not exhaustive determination; the nature of meaning itself, my understanding of what I am thinking, and how one thought leads to the next in a sensible developing process of thinking, play the decisive part. My own intentions, what I set myself to do all the time, affect the state and location of my body, initially, as a rule at least, through my brain, though what I actually intend is the state of the body that ensues. There is continuous interaction. No further explanation of this interaction is possible, we find that it happens in certain ways and with limitations which we come to know and reckon with in what we further set ourselves to do. But, however close and consistent the inter-dependence turns out to be, mental events remain radically different in nature from the physical ones that condition them. We know this immediately in the process of having any experience at all. To think and perceive, to set ourselves to accomplish things, is known to be non-extended and has none of the attributes of the external reality in which we function and communicate with one another. This I affirm on the grounds that I have specified and amplified elsewhere and without further commendation here.

But there is more to our existence than the actual course of our experience. One's experience does not merely happen, it happens *to me*; I am the one who sets himself to accomplish certain things. What is this me? What is being affirmed, in saying that

present purpose. On the whole there seems to me to be nothing of substance in the identity of entities other than subjects of experience which cannot be accounted for in terms of the relations or patterns or the proportions of things and their changes. But the matter is quite different in the mental sphere. Whatever we say of the world around us, my experiences and the properties we specify on the basis of these belong, it seems to me, in a peculiarly intimate and significant sense to a being, a self or subject, which can not be reduced in any way to the course of my experiences, including the things I intend, an entity which is, as we sometimes put it, over and above the course of my experiences themselves. There is not merely the pain, but my having the pain or my being in pain as more than just the pain occurring in certain conditions or a web of inter-relations.

There have been very determined, indeed, it seems to me, desperate, attempts to avoid coming to the conclusion that my experiences are had by me in a sense which goes altogether beyond their being the experiences they are. Some find the principle of personal identity in the continuity of our bodies, others consider that our bodies might be dispensable for this purpose. Some find our memories to be themselves constitutive of our identity. Others think in terms of the closeness of certain relations, or an overlap. I have examined typical impressive recent presentations of such views in my *The Elusive Self*. Ingenious as they often are, they all seem to me to leave out what is most evident and vital, to provide elaborate stories to cover up for something which is patently missing. I shall not illustrate that in detail again now. But we have to ask what it is that is essentially missing in such accounts of persons. What is it about the 'me', or the self as subject, which cannot be netted in variations on the theme of the nature and inter-relations, or the course and physical conditions, of my experiences in terms of which I deem them to be mine? What, over and above some features of the experiences themselves, is it for me to have them?

The answer to this question may seem to be disappointing or evasive. For the answer is that there is no proper answer we can give. If some account were offered of what precisely characterizes the self over and above what is otherwise said of experience and character, if properties were specified, then all this would have itself to be taken into the full account of experience and character. All we would have done would be to single out some rather special feature of our make-up or nature, completing the story as normally told. But the claim is, and has to be if it is to be significant, that there is something that does not come within this particular story at all, something which is not open to further description. But in that case how is it known?

The answer may be that it is known as a pre-supposition, along the lines of Kant, of our having the sort of experience we do have, and especially its coherence and the way we make sense of things; but I do not think we can get very far with that supposition on its own. As James Ward was fond of saying, the self must be 'a something'. It cannot be just a postulate known *a priori*, much less an 'imaginary focus'; but how is 'a something' known if not by description?

My own answer to this is that each one knows himself in the fact of being himself and having any experience whatsoever; I am in pain, to stick to the more simple stock

reached. For it is only too fatally easy to let ourselves be guided again by the model for our thought which is derived from the normal direction of our thinking in the understanding and management of things in the world around us. I have spoken already of 'owning', 'belonging', etc. These are words which have their normal habitat elsewhere than in reflection on ourselves. 'Own' is usually an ethical term; its significance in that sense has no direct relevance to the present issue. We likewise think of 'belonging' in terms of the relation of a part to a whole — this spoke belongs to this wheel, this cog to this part of a machine. But it is very misleading to think in these ways, or in any other way derived from external reality, in thinking of the self and its experiences.

Indeed the very notion of a relation itself is not very appropriate. We do indeed speak in that way. Our central question could well be put in the form of asking what is the relation of the self to its experiences, and at once we are on the slippery slope. For we are already thinking of some describable relation of the subject to passing mental events. This relation, if the word is appropriate at all, is a quite unique one for which there is no proper parallel, and we must be very careful not to give the impression of the self as something altogether apart, subsisting in splendid isolation but also, as it happens, related to certain experiences. That is the travesty which brings on the most severe and bewildered criticism, the self or subject being presented sometimes like a string on which beads are stretched. The best way to avoid this is to avoid as far as we can any pictures or models for the unique situation we are handling.

We do have to say that the self is more than the course of its experiences. It has them, but it is at the same time not an entity quite apart to which they are incidentally related. The experiences could indeed be different and the self is not an external something to which they are attached, it is much more unavoidably involved. It is me having the experiences; in a sense I am my experiences at the time though not exhaustively them. No proper wedge can be driven between me and my pain. But there is also more involved than the occurrence of the pain or the having it. It is *my* being in pain.

At this stage of the subject it is most essential that we hang on to this seemingly paradoxical position, that I am my pain, for example, and yet not it. The pain is not like a garment I put on and discard. I am it, and yet more than it and others too. The pain is not just a part of what I essentially am, but neither is it incidentally me. It is very genuinely me, and this is why I am especially concerned if I learn that I am about to be hurt. On the other hand, when the pain is over, it is still me, in my new state, and the whole indivisible me.

This is not in fact as paradoxical as it may seem. It only appears so when we bring the conventions and assumptions of our understanding of external things to the way we think about a radically different situation in our apprehension of ourselves and our mental states.

It follows also from what I have just been maintaining that when we think of persons being identified, on the one hand, by description and, on the other, in a yet more fundamental way as the being who is known, in the having of experience, in a

straightforward. We build around the cases in which we have firm continuity through memory in the strict sense, we build around these the events and situations of which we learn from independent evidence as having continuity, as parts of a rounded story, with the events we actually recall.³ This is not foolproof. In theory, or conceivably, there may be a substitution of distinct subjects at various stages of the story that extends beyond the events we strictly recall. But the boundaries of what we strictly recall are flexible. We can be brought to remember occasions which we had forgotten; and it seems in any case very improbable that there would have been some alternation of subjects within the area of a continuous ascertainable story which falls outside the events of which we can have memory in the strict sense. The complexities of any substitution in the course of an embodied existence, where a mind interacts with one exceptionally complicated neurological system, also tell heavily against the possibility of any suspension of continued identity in a life where the mind is organic to a particular body.

It is indeed not very difficult, along these lines, to establish at least a general principle of one mind, one body. If there seem to be exceptions, as in the now familiar problem cases, they must be approached on the basis of our initial understanding of the irreducible and indivisible character of the subject of experience as found by each one in his own case. Fission in any strict sense is ruled out in this way on principle. There could only be alternations of distinct subjects, or a very extraordinary concurrent interaction of one mind with more than one body. If the holy man, meditating in his high retreat, is able, as is alleged, to move around in the villages in another body or bodily form doing good, then he must be aware in the one consciousness of what goes on in both respects at the time.

If we think of the problem cases, for example the much discussed supposition that a brain might be divided into its two main halves and these housed in different bodies, then I think we must say that, if these two parts of the brain can function effectively in these conditions, they will stimulate memories which will only be possible if they are recalled by the one person who had the remembered experience originally. This is not so inherently preposterous as might appear at first, even though the bodies remain at opposite ends of the earth. For the mind itself is not extended and is not affected by the appropriate brain state through any physical contiguity. A more substantial difficulty would be the affecting of the mind at one and the same time by sets of stimuli from unrelated areas. But whatever we consider to be conceivable or probable in such very speculative examples, we can be certain, from what we find it to be to have a mind or be a person, that consciousness has its indivisible centre in one indispensable subject.

It is worth adding that the evidence from what is known of the surgical operations which prompt the very intriguing speculations of the problem cases is very far from providing any support for the supposition of strictly multiple personalities.⁴

We may, however, readily admit that there are important subsidiary ways in which we may be said to have different personalities. We function in a variety of ways and in very different spheres of interest, as in the fairly obvious division of one's life at work and one's life at home or in leisure projects. This may sometimes carry

them, two (or more) properly distinct individuals, then one would just have to say that they are distinct and not any multiplication or fission of the one initial individual. For we find, in one's own case initially, that consciousness has to be, from the nature of what we find it to be, the consciousness of one indivisible person. It is with this understanding, based not on blind affirmation but on reflection on what consciousness discloses itself to be, that we should set out to give a proper philosophical account of instances of seeming multiple personalities and similar problem cases.

If this seems dogmatic or apt to close the issue prematurely, I can only invoke the principle I have tried to defend elsewhere, namely that a point is reached in philosophical controversy when, not out of weariness but from what the situation involves, we can only reflect and declare the way things seem to us to be. I can easily conceive of myself being subject to drastic changes, in my circumstances or in my character – and we all do change a great deal in the course of our lives. But I can form no conception of what it would be for me to become strictly another person, another subject of experience – it would not be me; and it is for the same reason that I do not think it even conceivable that I should know the other person's mind strictly as it is for him. The prince may become the cobbler, but he knows that this total metamorphosis has happened to *him*. *He* is the one to whom this bewildering change has happened. He has not become the person the cobbler was, he has only changed his appearance and situation for that of the cobbler. He has his new experience still as his own, and even if we reach a stage where telepathy has become very common and extensive, this does not begin to give me the experience of the other person strictly as it is for him – or, so to put it, from within his own mind.

Normally, what happens in telepathy is that we find ourselves thinking somewhat insistently about someone else and what he may be undergoing or thinking, only to discover later that this corresponds closely to what in fact was the case. If this is often repeated we find the occasions such as to be more than astonishing examples of coincidence – as it would presumably be in an isolated case – and thus are induced to look for a further explanation in terms of some peculiar power we have to envision the situation of someone not present to us and think the kind of thoughts he is thinking – and we might do this of course for someone physically present who is not in fact communicating such thoughts to us in the normal ways. This is not the place to elaborate an exact account of how we must think of telepathy and related phenomena. All I wish to contend now is that, whatever theory we propound, there is nothing in the facts, if found to be para-normal, to require that I ever become the other person whose mind I 'read' in this strange fashion or *have* his thoughts in the way he has them as the individual expressly involved.

I reaffirm, then, the view that all experience is had, and all initiation made, by a subject which is simple and irreducible but at the same time has the experience as essentially its own, not as something incidentally attached or belonging. This, I submit, is what we find to be the case all the time. It is not peculiarly mysterious or bewildering but only seems so to philosophers and others heavily predisposed to look for ways of explaining things or describing and distinguishing them thereby in ways

nothing and does nothing. I can form no conception of what it would be like to exist in that way; and when the situation of possible dreamless sleep is mentioned in this context, I reply that, if this actually occurs, then I have for the time ceased to be. Some find this odd, and indeed a practical worry, but I myself do not find it disturbing philosophically or in any other way. Why should we be concerned about ceasing to be for a while if it is certain that we shall resume our existence as the persons we are now once the interval is over? We shall have missed only a few minutes of low-grade experience. The philosophical worry that there is nothing to ensure our identity in bridging the gap only comes about if we persist in thinking of identity in terms of characterizable continuity, or if we forget that in the last analysis there is nothing about us which guarantees our existence; we do not exist by necessity, and if we suppose, as I do, that there has to be some ultimate existence, or Supreme Being, to account for limited finite existences, then there is no reason to think that such a 'Ground' of our being could not establish us as we were after a lapse into non-existence.

In short, provided I return as the person I now know myself to be and have the normal continuity of my experience, as must be supposed if it is thought that we have dreamless sleep and then begin to dream and awake into our normal anticipated situation, there is nothing to alarm us or to cause us philosophical trouble in the possibility of a temporary conclusion of our existence. We assume, in any case, in Western culture, that we did not exist before our birth into the present life. What matters is that, in all experience, we should find ourselves to be the persons we have always been; and I have indicated already how this comes to be established. This view of persons, if it is sound, has many far-reaching implications. It is of great importance, for example, as I have insisted on other occasions¹⁰ for views we may hold about the possibility of existence after death and its nature. But I leave this aside, for the present purpose, to concentrate on my main preoccupation in this work, namely the nature and implications of our responsibility and freedom.

Addendum

The Logical Limits of Willing¹¹

Is it possible for us, by willing, to bring something about other than changes in our own bodies? In one sense at least the answer is obvious, namely that we can do this. We are doing it all the time. That is what our actions mostly involve, and, without that, life as we know it would hardly be possible. I tighten the grasp of my hand on a billiard cue and move it sharply forward so that the tip of it hits a ball which cannons off another. We can change things in this way at the other end of the world, by speaking on the phone, for example, to request or order something. We can bring highly complicated things about in remote parts of space. Indeed we could always do this, since any movement of our bodies brings about some change, however infinitesimal, in remote places.

But normally, at least, we do this solely by bringing about some change in our own

would certainly not hold that we can actually bring about two incompatible things. But I much doubt whether he thought we could will them in any sense. But if he did I would certainly consider him mistaken and saying something out of line with his central thesis. I hold this because willing is for Prichard a matter of setting ourselves to do something, and it does not seem to me even conceivable that a person should set himself to bring about something which he did not at the time think could be brought about in that way. This seems to me to be more than a feature of the rational beings that we are, it is an inherent impossibility.

The same applies to other cases where we might be thought to be willing things we do not consider possible or within our power. Prichard does indeed say¹⁵ that we could will the table to move as a way of proving to others or to ourselves that we could not so move the table. But he does this in the context of its being uncertain whether we could do this in some particular case, setting out in the preceding sentence with the statement that 'there is no reason to limit the change which it is possible to will to a movement of some part of our body'.¹⁶ He also thinks it possible that, at a football match we may will a player's speed to increase. I doubt whether we ever in fact do this, for the likelihood that our so willing would make a difference is so remote, in the light of all our experience, that it does not seem that we could normally consider it possible – and could therefore not properly will it.

We could in such a case go through the accompaniments of willing, or shout or wave our arms to encourage the player. But we would not normally expect our willing to make a difference, any more than when someone eagerly twists his body around, in a game of bowls, we seriously think that this will bring the bowl closer to its target. And, if we do not believe that something can be brought about by our willing, it is hard, in my view, to see how we could properly or seriously will it.

But while there are important logical limits to what we can will, including, in my view, our own beliefs as to what we may accomplish in that way, the possibility of changing things in the external world by other means than the mediation of our own bodies does not seem to me to be among them. We may believe this to be possible, and so set out to achieve it; and there is also no inherent reason why we may not be right in such an expectation.

Mr. Cohen presents his objections to this claim very succinctly in these terms: 'If it is the thesis that I might bring about a movement of a chair without there being any causal connections between my brain and the chair, then it is indeed incoherent because self-contradictory, positing and denying the existence of causal connections.'¹⁷ He concludes that 'it is no mere matter of fact that my actions are identified in connexion with this body'.¹⁸

This is a curious argument. For Prichard the causal connection immediately involved is that between willing or trying and some change in one's body or beyond it if that ever happens. But Cohen seems to be taking it that any causal connections we may posit must be of a neurological or other physical sort. If not what is the force of saying that Prichard 'denies the existence of causal connections'. But this is just to beg the question.

Prichard thus seems to me to be right in the view that there is no reason to limit

within the experience of the same person as new skills are acquired or other powers atrophy with age or illness. Paralysis limits our powers severely; and the conditions for such extensions and limitations of our physical powers can be discovered and, in some measure, modified. But, even with such knowledge, we can say nothing about such ability as we have to bring about bodily changes other than what, in the last resort, we find to be the case.

It is interesting that those, notably of late Brian O'Shaughnessy, who make the need for exhaustive explanation final, and thus find a fatal flaw in the 'brute fact' thesis, provide nothing by way of explanation besides the familiar story about brain changes and neurology etc. This might do, up to a point, on an outright physicalist view, but it is no advance for those who do lay some stress on the distinctness of the willing or 'trying'. No explanation is available at that point other than what we find to be the case.

It is for this reason that those who go along with Prichard (and William James and many others before him) can entertain the possibility that we could will, and by so doing bring about, some change beyond the limit of our own bodies. Whether that in fact ever happens is another matter. It is totally at odds with what we find we can normally accomplish, and it falls outside the normal conditions and character of physical action. But it is not otherwise absurd, as would be the claim to have learned to ride a square-circle. If someone should claim that he can successfully will the chair to rise as he manages to raise his arm, our initial reaction would surely be, not to register total mystification, but *to challenge him to do it*. If he did then announce that he was so willing and we found the chair rising, we would still remain deeply suspicious, though no doubt astonished too. It would look as if we had to 'believe our eyes', with the likelihood of a linkage with the alleged willing. But we would also want to go on with further tests, to make sure that there was no fraud or some other more normal explanation. This is plainly what happens when such claims are made. We request a repeat performance and call in those best qualified to discover some explanation (in terms of trickery or otherwise) which would fall within what we normally expect. expert scientists or the conjurors and magicians skilled in seeming to do 'impossible' things. If all such persons failed to provide the explanation we expect of them, it would become hard to resist the conclusion that someone had the power to will something successfully without the initial bodily change.

The main point is that what would settle the matter for us is evidence, and the availability of some normal explanation of evidence. It would not be a matter to be settled *a priori*.

To those who dispute this I would like to put the question – What line do they take on the extensive claims that are made for paranormal phenomena? A great part of these do involve changes which are brought about by our willings, or by other mental states, without the normal mediation of our own bodies. Are these to be rejected out of hand without even troubling to investigate them? That would seem to be very high-handed, especially as some very distinguished and cautious investigators, including in our own time C. D. Broad and H. H. Price, seem convinced that some paranormal phenomena are genuine. Is the whole area of alleged paranormal

CHAPTER II

Punishment and Responsibility

The ideas of responsibility and punishment seem to go very closely together. The most obvious form of this is that punishment is thought to be inflicted properly only on the guilty in respect of some failure to make appropriate use of their responsibility. We do indeed sometimes use the words 'punishing the innocent', and it is hard to see how this can be altogether avoided. If there has been some 'miscarriage of justice' and an innocent person comes in this way to be wrongly convicted and sentenced, perhaps to death or imprisonment, we are deeply disturbed at this suffering of an innocent person; and we protest and seek to have amends made, where possible, for this wrongful punishment. But one cannot be altogether happy with this way of speaking. We are even less happy if it is thought that there may be very exceptional circumstances where we would proceed against those who have done no wrong for some retaliatory purpose or, by some deception, 'make an example of them' or allow them to become scapegoats. Whether there are circumstances which could justify this expedient is a moot point. Most of us would take a great deal of convincing. But I do not wish to go into that question here. Punishment is normally of the guilty, and it is only under cover of pretending that the innocent are guilty, or framing them, that the dire expedient of punishing the innocent can be thought to have any purpose or justification — if it has. At some point there is a presumption of guilt.

The same goes for cases where an innocent person takes on himself the punishment of the guilty. This may be done out of profound concern, or to meet some supposed requirement of justice. Various forms of expiation come about in this way, and the more unblemished the victim the better. But in these cases also the ultimate presumption is of guilt somewhere. That is what calls for punishment.

The situation in which we are most prone to think that punishment for some wrongful action may have to fall on persons quite other than the actual perpetrators of the deed is where there is supposed to be some shared or collective responsibility whereby those who are not themselves implicated, or at least not directly so, are presumed all the same to share the actual guilt of the persons expressly accountable. But in this case the assumption is that persons who had no part, at least explicitly, in some wrongful action may all the same in some way become partakers of the guilt and responsibility for it.

Alternatively, we may think of punishment falling on the innocent simply because they are unavoidably hurt in the punishment of those who are actually guilty.

enactment. What these are need not detain us now. But personal relations, matters of literary and artistic interest, and religious belief and commitment, are obvious examples. This does not mean that the law has no concern of any kind with such matters. Just how the law may properly impinge upon them is a delicate question. But it seems beyond dispute that the law would defeat itself if it went too far in these matters. There are things, our attitudes of mind or our feelings, for example, which simply cannot be enforced by law directly; and there is much that we do, and which is to be highly esteemed, which would lose its point if done under compulsion, displays of courtesy and consideration for instance. Much will turn here on the spirit in which something is done, and on a delicacy in the execution which it would be out of the question to enforce.

T. H. Green has laid down a helpful principle for us here:

'Those acts only should be matter of legal injunction or prohibition of which the performance or omission, irrespectively of the motive from which it proceeds, is so necessary to the existence of a society in which the moral end stated can be realized, that it is better for them to be done or omitted from that unworthy motive which consists in fear or hope of legal consequences than not to be done at all'.⁵

It is only outward conformity that can be directly enforced. Even here there is some limit in actual compliance. To take a trivial example, suppose it were thought important that we should greet one another politely by saying 'Good day'. This could certainly be effectively enforced by sufficiently rigorous penalties. But it would also be possible to say 'Good day, Sir', as sometimes happens, as a brusque dismissal or in some other hostile way, or, if one were required by law to doff one's hat, one might do so with an air of extreme contempt. Some well-meaning persons, often with a fine cause to further, have done their cause great harm by seeking to enforce by law certain matters which cannot be effectively furthered in that way. R. M. MacIver provided an impressive list in a well-known work *The Modern State*.⁶

The most direct way to bring out the radical difference, in what they mean, between law and morality is to note that it is possible to do grievous wrong morally, to be thoroughly wicked, without contravening any law of the land, and, on the other hand, to commit a serious crime and be morally innocent or indeed worthy of great esteem. Literature and history provide notable examples of persons who have been outrageously wicked without committing any crime. We need look no further than Mr. Tulkinghorn in *Bleak House* to find a rogue who knew the law well enough to keep the right side of it. Few ordinary citizens commit crimes, apart from minor matters like parking offences. But how many could put their hands on their hearts to say they had never in other ways been seriously at fault?

Examples of persons, on the other hand, who have been gravely at odds with the law but are, in the same respect, without blemish or indeed worthy of high esteem are easily found. In some of these cases there may be no more involved than ignorance, either of the circumstances or the precise requirements of the law, and if the ignorance is not due to easily avoidable negligence, the law itself would usually find exculpation in it, though it may sometimes have to take its course without allowing

This needs to be firmly stressed in the present state of the world and of our own society. There is deeply embedded in our own history, from the time of *Magna Carta* and earlier, and in impressive ways in our Celtic heritage, and through *Habeas Corpus* acts to the rule of law and electoral procedures of today, a profound respect for law and related supports of freedom. Compromise is not a sign of weakness but of strength. We need to be reminded of this when powerful sections of the community have recourse to new sources of power, made possible by democratic advances, to impose their will ruthlessly on others. The complexities of our economic existence, and the close web of industrial life, at home and abroad, give us new instruments of power which need to be used with restraint and respect for agreed methods of settling differences on which our health and prosperity are greatly dependent.

But when all this has been said, and stressed far more than is appropriate here, it must also be allowed that even in democratic communities, and highly advanced ones, the point may be reached when individual members of such communities, or organised groups, may have to say, as was said at another period of turbulence and crisis, 'Here I stand, I can do no other'. This stance may be justified in a particular case, or it may not. It may be objectively, or, as it is sometimes put, materially right. But, whether it is or not, this, as such, has no direct bearing on the properly moral worth of the agent. That, as will be stressed again, depends entirely on the loyalty of a person to his duty as he sees it at the time. In theological terms, there is no 'sinning in ignorance', or at least in 'invincible' ignorance. Failure to take proper care and trouble is another matter. But a conscientious person can do no other at the time than act in accordance with what seems to him at the time required. It does not follow that when a person sincerely does this, our respect for his integrity and devotion to duty precludes his being rightfully hindered or stopped by others. Sincere convictions are also fallible, and in some cases the error may be gravely damaging. In that case, respect for conscience would be consistent with the intervention of others. How, in practice, those matters should be approached, is a further question. How much allowance should be made for integrity etc. will vary much with other circumstances, and here again there will be something which is actually or materially required, together with our honest fallible convictions as to what that is. I have written at more length on this elsewhere.

But the main point at the moment is that, even in democratic communities, and after adjustment to their imperfections, the point may be reached when the circumstances justify some unconstitutional action of one form or another, and that even when this is not objectively the case, the moral worth of the agent, even a very misguided but sincere one, is unimpaired and depends entirely on all he is prepared to do or endure in the line of duty as he sees it – irrespectively of all that others may feel, and perhaps rightly, they should do to arrest the mischief such persons may cause. There is no strict rule in these matters, only guidelines and the 'rule of thumb', which throws us back ultimately again in practice on each one's fallible judgement, a judgement nonetheless claiming truth about what is in fact required.

It seems, then, to return to our main theme at the moment, that what is required in the way of moral demand and appraisal is radically different, in intention or meaning

Retribution must also be distinguished from making amends, though the latter, in some forms, may border on retribution, at least to the extent of its being thought to be inherently appropriate that the offender himself should be making amends. But we seem to pass beyond punishment proper here and to enter a terrain where other considerations, some form of expediency for example, may be most involved. It has been argued that the best treatment for some offenders, young persons perhaps especially, is to set them to work to repair some damage they have done. But the idea of retribution itself goes no further than the infliction of suffering, or its like in the form of deprivations etc., on the offender as what is immediately due to him in virtue of the wrongful thing he has done.

The second view of punishment to be noted here is the reformatory one. According to this view, the purpose and justification of punishment is to reform the wrong-doer, especially in the form of making him genuinely sorry for what he has done or repentant. This must obviously mean more than that the offender is determined not to err in the same way again. For this might involve no more than that he has learnt how much to his disadvantage it may be to offend, a matter that falls under the deterrent theory to which I shall come. The reform must be genuine, and not a matter of prudence, a true change of heart, though it could involve other matters than strictly moral ones, the deepening of sensitivity and understanding perhaps.

We must not, however, conflate the reformatory view of punishment with the advances we have in mind when we speak generally of penal reform. These are not meant to be part of the punishment as such. If they affect it this will almost certainly be as an amelioration. To have less crowded accommodation in prison, to be taught skills or a trade they might follow later, to have opportunities of improving their minds or working for a degree, to be protected against exploitation or sadism, to have remission for good behaviour or parole, to have access to those who may help if there is suspicion of injustice or need for greater privacy at visiting times – all such things may be greatly to the benefit of the offender and help to make him a better person and better able to take his place in society later. But such arrangements, although they have to do with punishment, are not implemented as part of the punishment itself. In most cases they would considerably lighten it, and objections are sometimes raised on the score that reforms move too far in the direction of comfort and easement.

What the reformatory theory of punishment, therefore, implies is that the punishment as such, *qua* infliction of suffering, may bring about a genuine change of heart and related changes of attitude and character.

The third view to be noted now is the deterrent one. On this view the purpose and justification of punishment is to deter the offender, and others by his example, from behaving in undesirable ways, in the familiar words of John Locke to make it a bad bargain for the offender. It must be made clear that wrong-doing does not pay, or at least that the chances of its paying are low. In practice this seems to be the main justification of punishment and one about which there would be the main consensus of opinion among those who agree that punishment in some conditions is justified. Social enactments must be maintained, lawlessness and hurtful behaviour curbed; and if there are persons who will not observe these requirements out of genuine

bondage and ransom are understood for what they are – metaphors; and renewed efforts are made to appreciate better what must be understood, in respect of both original intention and later refinement, by ‘alienation’, ‘lostness’, ‘the price that was paid’, salvation and reconciliation. Such undertakings will concern us closely later. But at the moment all that we need to note is that an outright notion of retribution has played a part in the evolution of Christian doctrines and contributed in part to some of its more objectionable forms. Whether, as many suppose, it has still to be invoked in some way, short of complete transformation into some new idea, is a moot point on which I will not dwell further here. But it must be noted that some of our most remarkable thinkers, such as Kant, and many clear-sighted and liberal thinkers of today, have been loath to discard the notion of retribution altogether.

For my own part, however sympathetic I try to be, I can find no merit or fittingness in the infliction of suffering on an offender as an end in itself or an inherent ethical requirement – punishment for its own sake, if we may so put it. That there are natural reactions that bring us close to this I admit. When some peculiarly atrocious crime is committed, callous cruelty for example, it is very natural to feel that the perpetrator of it should, as we put it, be made ‘to take some of his own medicine’. He should not go scot-free when he has purposely caused acute and sustained misery to others, he should get ‘what is coming to him’. It is unjust that he should not be brought low himself. But there are in fact many strands in these spontaneous reactions. One is sheer revulsion at the deed. The other is the very proper sentiment that there is something deeply amiss, a thoroughly bad state of affairs, when a person in full possession of his faculties can commit vile atrocities without compunction. Such a one should be made to realize what he has done, it must be brought home to him, and this just because it is such a bad thing for him to be so insensitive. It is to do good to him, to stir up some pity and comprehension by his becoming more aware of the enormity of what he has done. There is also, especially in cases of assault and violence, much fear and the concern that such deeds should be ‘stamped out’ by the example of penalties they incur. Our spontaneous reactions are a mixture, and severely utilitarian concern may masquerade as the exaction of retribution.

It must be allowed that what I have called spontaneous reactions can in fact be long-lived. They persist many years after a crime has been committed and cause much public resentment of any easement or remission of a long sentence. My suspicion is that much of this arises from anxiety that, however the offender may appear on the surface to be now a changed person, some of the earlier motivation or madness may erupt again. There is also personal hate or resentment, especially a sense of unfairness when the victims of a crime still bear the marks of it. This is understandable, but retribution in the properly ethical sense is another matter. Apart from consideration of some good purpose served, for the wrong-doer or others, I fail to see that any ethical requirement is met by the infliction of suffering on an evil-doer simply because he is that, and irrespective of some good, perhaps of a suitable kind, to be brought about.

A further thought, to be brought out more fully later, is that assessment of

It has often been stressed, as Bradley does especially in his celebrated essay on 'The Vulgar Notion of Responsibility',⁷ that, in all our thinking on this subject, there lies the deep conviction that no one can be properly called to account for what he has done or blamed except in respect of something which is truly *his doing*. 'The vulgar understand that *we* answer; that we answer not for everything, but only for what is ours; or, in other words, for what can be imputed to us'⁸, 'the deed must issue from my will'.⁹ If I am not the proper agent there is no sense in blaming me. But we have to consider also that what we are, the sort of person one is and the conduct that flows from this, is shaped by heredity and environment; and, when we think in those terms, we are apt to conclude that, if a full account is taken, if we heed all that has made us what we are up to the very moment of action, what we do at some particular time is inevitable; it could not be otherwise, or, in further familiar terms, we 'could not help it'. There is generated thus, and intensified by various views about Providence or Fate or Divine Foreknowledge that may be held, the notion that we cannot be free in a way that would warrant our being called to account or blamed.

This is the age-long problem of free will, debated, according to Milton, even by the demons 'on a hill apart'. It seems, along one line of thinking at least, that we cannot be held responsible for anything, since nothing is properly our own doing. What we are and do is pre-ordained, or, if that is a somewhat laden term, determined by all the factors that have made us what we are and prescribe in that way what we do. This is the central problem for us in this study. In what sense do we have to be free to be morally accountable creatures, and do we ever have such freedom?

There are various answers to this question, and they will be noted in due course. I want here to note one very simple answer that appeals to many today and which depends expressly on the assimilation of moral to legal responsibility in the supposition that, in both cases, the crucial notion is punishment and our liability to it. Bradley, who does not however fall for the answer to be noted at the moment, puts it all very succinctly: 'For practical purposes we make no distinction between responsibility, or accountability, and liability to punishment. Where you have the one, there (in the mind of the vulgar) you have the other; and where you have not the one, there you can not have the other'.¹⁰ This is firm and unambiguous. It is the basis for one widely canvassed solution to the problem of moral freedom.

That answer proceeds to note that, even if we find some form of determinism unavoidable, we may still find the infliction of punishment a defensible practice. Admittedly, the offender, in legal or moral wrong-doing, could not do other than he did at the time; all things considered he 'could not help it', the issue was inevitable at the time. But punishment, in certain conditions, could still serve a practical purpose. It could affect the conduct of the offender on some other occasion; it may, in the form of imprisonment perhaps, effectively prevent him from repeating his offence; and, as is even more important, it is very likely to deter others who might be tempted to commit the same offence or its like. The example of what the offender has suffered, in the course of his punishment, the extent to which his conduct proved a 'bad bargain' for him, will be in his own mind and that of others when temptation presents itself again. If, therefore, all that is involved in moral accountability is liability to

This is very clearly presented. I can also readily make substantial concessions to it. In rejecting the retributive view, I agree that the purpose and justification of punishment must be the good, if any, to the offender and the deterrence of himself and others on other occasions – mainly the latter. It seems clear also that punishment in these ways makes good sense even when it is understood that it was inevitable at the time that the offender should behave as he did. There are various things which we would not punish, bad though their consequences may be. For they are not the kind of things that could be modified by punishment. If a person has no ear for music no amount of punishment would make a musician of him. If a train-driver fails to stop his train because the brakes failed, in a way in which he himself could not have foreseen or prevented, punishment would not induce him or others to do better another time. But if the driver had been negligent it would be quite another matter. However unavoidable, granted all that was true about me at the time, my punishment could induce in me or others a better frame of mind on other occasions.

Indeed, we punish animals or brutes in that way – if that is a proper term here. We house-train puppies by making things unpleasant for them, or swish the cat to teach it not to leap on the table to lap up the milk. Some training of this sort may be cruel, and in that case few would approve of it, but the point at the moment is that such training can be effective, and the like can be effective in the way we control one another's conduct, or are controlled by our society. The ways in which this should be done, and the ends it should serve, are another matter. The point at the moment is that the infliction of punishment in these ways is in no way pointless if it should also appear that the sort of creature one is at a particular time makes it inevitable that we pursue a particular course.

Do I go along then with Nowell-Smith and his like? By no means. But the point at which I part company with them precedes the points which I have in common with them and the concessions I have just made. I challenge the claim that, *in the properly moral sense*, responsibility has to be essentially tied up with punishment, the one, as Bradley puts it, being unthinkable without the other. The issue of punishment, of when and how it is appropriate, is a quite separate one; and, if we think in terms of some inherent suitability of punishment, and do not treat it entirely as a practical device, then, far from punishability itself giving us the meaning of responsibility, it itself presupposes it. The punishment is called for because we have done ill and are already wicked and guilty. If wickedness calls for punishment it must have some prior reality of its own. If there is a debt to be cancelled, the debt must have been incurred in some way already.

This makes a position like that of F. H. Bradley peculiarly difficult to understand. He is so emphatic about the inherent appropriateness of punishment, irrespective of any further purposes it serves. He is particularly careful to indicate the conditions, as he understands them, in which punishment may be incurred. A punishable offence must be very certainly one's own doing, that is the only way in which punishment can be deserved. There is a 'necessary connection of punishment and guilt. Punishment is punishment, only when it is deserved. We pay the penalty because we owe it, and for no other reason'.²⁰ But how do we come to owe it? 'It is because I have

- 19 *ibid.*, p. 306.
- 20 *Ethical Studies*, p. 25.
- 21 *ibid.*, p. 25.
- 22 *ibid.*, p. 25.
- 23 *ibid.*, p. 25.

CHAPTER III

Moral Worth and Moral Choice

The answer to the question I have just raised is, it seems to me, a simple one. To be responsible is to be the sort of being whose conduct is open in certain respects to peculiar ethical distinctions of morally good or morally bad in appropriate degrees. The notions of moral worth, and, correspondingly, evil, are peculiar and ultimate ethical ones. We can give no proper indication of what they are other than by eliciting the recognition of them in the circumstances in which they apply. This will seem to many frustrating. Should not a philosopher say more? I sympathise with this reaction, and I have on more than one occasion complained of the practice of taking one's stance in a final way over matters which admit of further analysis and argument. We often reach the stopping place too soon. But while this needs to be carefully borne in mind, and considerable caution so induced, there are matters which we seem to see to be as they are without further reason for that being required or in order.

In such cases we can only reflect on the way things seem to be. The proliferation of arguments beyond the point, or in ways, where they are no longer appropriate may stimulate impressive ingenuity. But that is not the sole test of achievement and excellence in philosophy. Insight is needed also, intuition, as the word is sometimes used. The word 'intuition' has some unfortunate associations, more evident perhaps in travesties of what intuitionists have maintained than in their practice. Perhaps we should avoid it, although it is used in the same sense as the present one by thinkers whom we could hardly accuse of hasty dogmatism, for example A. J. Ayer. But whether we retain this word or not, it seems unavoidable that there should be a point in our reflections where we can only indicate the way things seem to be.

This does not mean that we have recourse to nothing to further our reflection at that stage. We may bring to mind, and instance for others, those features of a situation which have most relevance to the stance we seem forced to take. We may reflect again and become more skilled in the process. But we have to stay with what seems to us the case, in open, patient reflection, about the world around us and its significance for us and our relations with one another. We do not *make* the world or anything about it. We stand finally in all matters on the way things seem to be.

It does in this way appear plain to me that, when we consider certain features of our conduct we seem forced to recognise in them some value or disvalue, in various degrees, which is unique and distinct, very radically distinct, from other evaluations.

Professor Nowell-Smith would not deny this. But he would account for the difference entirely in terms of the fact that it is pointless to punish the clerk who blunders, and that his dismissal would not be regarded as punishment, however unfortunate, while the dishonest clerk, and others tempted to follow suit, might be induced to hesitate and refrain in future by thought of the censure and punishment they may incur. But are we to think seriously that this is all that is involved? Is our attitude merely that of persons concerned, for the good of us all, with stamping out dishonesty? Do we simply say 'We must take all measures to see that this does not go on, we must be able to count on our money being safe in the bank and related transactions?' Is there not an immediate reaction to the vile or dastardly character of the action in itself?

It may be well perhaps to think of other examples than stock ones of dishonesty and violent crime, forms of spite or meanness that will find their way more easily into the lives of people well placed in their communities. Suppose someone confides in me, trusting me as a friend whom he can consult, and I subsequently use this confidence as a means of furthering my own interest at his expense. Suppose an examiner takes it out on a candidate to whom he has taken a dislike, or suppose, in the course of some appointment, I favour a candidate who seems not so good as another because this would be in some way advantageous to me, or as a favour to a friend. Would we deplore such activities merely in the sense that we must do all we can to discourage them, on account of their harmful consequences? Is there not an immediate reaction of moral revulsion? That of course presupposes the harm that is being done – or is likely. But our reaction is also an immediate one to the lapse or misdemeanour in itself.

Consider the terms we use in such cases – 'vile', 'detestable', 'mean', 'vicious', 'bad lot', 'bounder', 'wicked' or, if not too wholly outmoded to mention, 'sin'. Deliberate cruelty to persons at our mercy, whatever form it takes, readily elicits the condemnation these terms involve. It is a condemnation of what is done, and not merely of deplorable results. An accident may cause grievous harm. But to be upset about this is a very different matter from our attitude to someone who risked, or perhaps staged, an accident for some gain to himself. The condemnation implied in the terms I have listed, and their like, seems plainly of a special kind and quite different from the horror or dismay we may feel over some natural calamity, distress or deprivation. It is a pity when our aptitudes are very limited, when acute senility overcomes highly gifted people, or when multitudes of people remain illiterate and almost wholly deprived of access to creative works of genius and the facility to enjoy them. But if we say that such things are bad, there is no thought of immediate moral condemnation; we reserve the latter for any who may have helped to bring about such conditions or neglected to do what they could to prevent them.

It does not follow that our condemnation, of ourselves in remorse or of others in the ascription of guilt or wickedness, always needs to be overtly expressed. How far we should express condemnation openly is a moot point. We are warned, in a celebrated context, to 'judge not'. The person who is constantly censorious of others may easily lapse into smug self-righteousness. Public condemnation in general terms

we have instanced, the worth of intelligence, for instance, or of having fine friends. But this is where the real crux is found. In the last resort we are fortunate to have these characteristics. No one is condemned for the lack of them, unless it be for earlier lapses which caused the deprivation. But we do condemn wickedness, we view it with an opprobrium which sets it quite apart from the badness of stupidity or loneliness; and surely the reason for this is that we cannot, in the final account, help these latter while, it seems implied, we can in a final unambiguous way help the conduct which is subject to moral condemnation.

But if there is no way in which we could not help the conduct which is subject to properly moral appraisal, if it has to be free in some much more radical and total way than other features of the course of our lives which also admit of value distinctions of the appropriate kind, then there seems to be no alternative but to recognise, in this one feature of our existence, a freedom without parallel elsewhere, a totally new beginning or, as it is sometimes put today, a 'choice between genuinely open alternatives' such that, granted everything else in the situation, what was done could have been other than it was.

This is the freedom which libertarians or indeterminists are taken to champion. I prefer the former less negative term. Indeed, it is alleged at times that there are forms of indeterminism other than that we find in morally accountable choices, in nature for instance. But if that is the case, which I very much doubt, then it can have very little in common with the positive exercise of freedom of choice to which I am now alluding.

It must be stressed also that the purported new beginning, without pre-determination of any sort, is not in all other ways cut off from the situation in which it occurs and all that has gone to shape that. It is not a bolt from the blue, a totally random event, a blind innovation. If it were it could certainly have no moral significance. It would be devoid of all significance and purport. But moral action is pre-eminently significant, what could be more so? It is a purposeful response to the situation as the agent finds it, including his own thoughts and attitudes and all that is set as the total situation to which he must respond. It is the response itself that is untrammelled, an innovation within the situation that invites it but which is not itself set or determined in the same way; it could, in the fullest sense, have been other than it was.

But when this sort of freedom is mooted, or thought to be genuine, certain familiar objections present themselves at once, and although they have been very conclusively met, in some respects at least, by supporters of the libertarian view, their persistence and the neglect of the answers given to them make it necessary to refer yet again to these objections.

There are two major objections to be noted. They are closely related. First of all there is the reference to the obvious continuity of character and conduct. We do not expect one another's behaviour to be totally random. As it is also put, we do not 'expect any action to come from any man at any time'. This is plainly so. We act in character. Even when behaviour does seem random, as in cases of extreme insanity or delirium, it is the sort of wildness we expect in these conditions and is in its own

in moral estimation, a mistaken view as to what we ought to do cannot be itself directly relevant to what is morally good or bad in our conduct. Ignorance, whether of fact or of moral import, is not a properly moral fault. In religious terms, we cannot sin in ignorance. Such ignorance is regrettable, and it may on occasion have grievous consequences; it may be a seriously bad thing in itself, a genuine defect; but where it is not due to negligence or some like fault, where it is unavoidable or, in the traditional term, 'invincible', it is not as such morally reprehensible, for the plain reason again that, if it is invincible, it is *ipso facto* something we could not help at the time; and where the weight is placed, as we have maintained it must be, on what we can help, moral error or ignorance is not in itself a moral defect. This will be stressed further.

Our opinions, sound or mistaken, about what we ought to do are of course vital ingredients in the situation in which moral choice is made, and it is of great importance that they should be as sound as we can make them. All that matters now is that while such opinions are vital for the moral situation, they are not themselves expressly subject to moral praise or blame. The other major ingredient is what a person most wishes to do at the time. We have again to stress that what matters is what one *most* wishes to do. There are many things at some particular time which one would like to do, and much to which we are averse. But many of these count little in determining the main set of our inclinations. They are weak and of little importance. I have arranged, let us suppose, to teach a class some afternoon. It also happens to be a fine day, and I am much drawn to the possibility of swimming in the lake. But, however much I may toy with this idea and say, wistfully to myself or aloud to my friends, 'I wish I were out at the lake instead of the classroom', there is no serious likelihood that such a wish will prevail over my concern to teach my class effectively, to avoid disappointment to those who expect me, to maintain my reputation as a dependable teacher in my college etc. No serious thought is given to playing truant at the lake. It is no part of my sustained important inclinations.

It will much help here to recall what was stressed so much in ethical textbooks earlier this century and in the hey-day of British idealism, namely that there are 'universes of desire', as J. S. Mackenzie called them in his widely used *Manual of Ethics* of another day. Many things appeal to us at some level, they might even be desired intensely if nothing else was involved and we allowed our thoughts to dwell upon them. But in practice they matter little, for they are out of accord with our way of life and what we have planned in accordance with that. They do not belong to a sufficiently strong universe of desire. But there may be strains and tensions as between major sets of our inclinations also, and a wild or more isolated desire may, in special circumstances, become a powerful and insistent one. How these convolutions proceed within the set of our inclinations as a whole does not concern us particularly now. But, while we are sometimes torn between conflicting inclinations, one or other will normally prevail, both in the set of our dispositions and in what we are overtly drawn to at the time. This may alternate with considerable periods of oscillation, more so for some persons than others, and there may in some circumstances be rapid shifts of mood and inclination. We need not consider those closely. For all that we

But in the absence of evidence of criminal propensities or of some extraordinary change in my circumstances or condition, like my becoming insane, all who know me and my way of life can be quite confident that I will have no inclination to rob or cause physical harm. Such behaviour would not come within my way of life, it would be damaging to my main concerns and, to put it at its lowest, it would expose me to risks which I am least likely to take. My friends could assume this with every confidence, subject to a general uncertainty which allows, on rare occasions, for shattering surprises and tragic disillusionment. Those are inexplicable at the time but not inherently so. Normally, my friends could count on me not to rob a bank.

They could equally count on me, to take more lighthearted examples, not to fall into pointlessly ridiculous behaviour. My students, having every reason to believe me fit and sane, would not expect me to break into aimless songs in the middle of my lecture, or try to stand on my head. If I did so they would be deeply concerned about my health. They would have no reason for that if 'any action could come from any man at any time' – I might be as likely to leap out of the window as to continue my talk. But they have in fact every reason not to expect me to fall into ridiculous behaviour. It is not the way of academic teachers, or indeed of any other persons normally. There is no indication of my being an exception, and my students can count on that, in the first place, because they have no reason to suspect that I would ever, least of all in normal circumstances, *want* to expose myself to ridicule or put my work and career at risk.

But they also have every reason to believe, in much the same terms, that there is little likelihood, in any normal circumstances, that I would consider it a duty to behave in these ways. Circumstances could always make a difference. The course to which I am deeply averse may become attractive with sufficient inducement. It is not easy to think of an inducement that would persuade me to throw all academic caution and pride to the winds. Not even for the vastest fortune, I would say; but ingenuity might invent such circumstances. It might also, more easily, invent circumstances in which I might find it a duty to behave with an absurdity of which I would not at the time be free to account. It could well be a duty to do so if in some strange way that would prevent an atrocity or stop a madman from pressing the button to set off an explosive device. But there would have to be unusual circumstances to account for this deviation from what we would normally assume.

In normal circumstances, and in the light of all that is usually evident about me, my friends and my students would not expect pointlessly ridiculous behaviour from me. Even the most eccentric must draw the line somewhere. And this is because there is no reason to suppose that I could come to want to behave in that way or consider it my duty.

In changed circumstances, as I have intimated, the case could be different, and in normal conditions the gap between duty and interest, in the form indicated already, opens in diverse ways, to be noted again, according to character and circumstances. Where there is no such gap the continuity and predictability of conduct continues.

This seems to be as conclusive a reply as any such could be to the supposition that a libertarian is committed to a view of the random character of all our conduct utterly at odds with the normal accepted continuity of character and conduct.

when the occasion calls for an open choice, a choice that is worlds apart from other determinations and the randomness which is only meaningful, if at all, in the context of those determinations.

This may seem to call for closer examination than I am offering now, and a fuller defence, but I must plead that such has been the main topic of several more extended writings of mine on the subject. The case I present now, and the answer at this point to what seems an exceptionally formidable objection to a libertarian view of choice, stands or falls with the view I have defended elsewhere about the unique inwardness of self-awareness and the meaningfulness of the notion of a subject which is other than its passing states or any patterning of them or the dispositions they reflect. The self as known to itself is other than all these, however closely involved, as I have also much stressed that it is, in them all. Only such a self could make an ultimately open, undetermined choice. But that we are such, and that, on certain occasions and in some respects, we have the special experience of making such choices, I have no doubt and can only invite others to reflect whether they do not find their experience the same.

It will be well now to bring out more explicitly the difference between choice in the properly moral sense and other sorts of choices or decisions we may be said to make. In the commonest day-to-day use of 'choice' we are thinking only of the way our preferences sort themselves out in relation to one another from moment to moment. Some of these are trivial and come about with such ease that we barely note them. I walk round one side of a puddle rather than another, or more to one side rather than another to avoid an oncoming person on the pavement, I take my turn round the garden in one course rather than another. Hardly anything hinges on what I do in these ways. It is all trivial and costs no effort. In other cases I may ponder more. Shall I continue my walk into the forest or go home the shorter way? This may depend on the time or a glimpse of threatening clouds. There may be more hesitation, but no very great pondering. A person partial to chocolates may have a box held out to him and hold his finger hovering over it while he makes his choice or 'makes up his mind'. It is soon settled. But even in trivial cases, and where the decision is smooth and straightforward, there is some consideration which inclines us one way rather than another or, as we sometimes put it, 'makes us' decide as we do.

This is sometimes disputed, it being argued that, at least where there is no obvious reason to go one way rather than the other, we just choose. As this is taken by some to be also an example of some sort of randomness in our conduct I shall return to it again. But for the moment I shall content myself with noting that it seems clear to me that there always is some consideration, however trivial and implicit, which governs our choice, if only where our eye lights on a box of sweets or how we are moving already on the lawn or where the light falls. This may be barely perceptible and no note taken of it, but there must always be something. Our walk is not reflex action or merely mechanical.

In other cases where more is involved and where the decision calls for more pondering, in examining a menu or buying a dress or, more weightily, buying a house or changing one's job, we think hard and hesitate much up to the point where

But an inclination to do one's duty as such, a natural response to what is found fitting or required, whether this comes about by training and cultivation or by some more inherent excellence and endowment of character, is in no way the same as the resolve to do one's duty when not even the thought of its being one's duty prevails over other inclinations in the shaping of our own preferences in relation to each other at the time. It is when we pass beyond the process of the shaping of preferences, and of choosing in that sense, that we have the open choice in which properly moral attainment or failure consists.

It is most important that this should be stressed. For the fact that an obligation may be involved, in the way indicated, in the adjustment of preferences and accordingly perhaps affect our conduct, may give the impression that all that is required in the way of morally responsible choice has been met. But there is a world of difference between a natural adjustment of this sort, coming about in the normal course of things within our natural endowment as affected by other factors, and the open choice which does not flow from anything other than itself and which, for that reason, we can 'help' in the fullest and most final way as required for the imputation of properly moral blame or the recognition of distinctively moral excellence. In this latter case, it is not any feature of our natural endowment or circumstances that matters, however elevated, but the supreme and peculiar exercise by the self, solely of itself, of the determination of the course it will set itself, subject of course to conditions by which the choice is set. It is on this latter choice, our uniquely moral enactment, that moral worth depends.

We have, in addition, to distinguish very carefully between moral choice, as already presented, and a further way in which, in common parlance at least, we may be said to be exercising a moral choice or making a moral decision. This concerns the preliminary process of deciding what is our duty, what, to the best of our understanding, is required of us in various respects at different times. This is often straightforward. Having settled for a certain way of life, a profession etc., as a proper course for us, that in itself will prescribe, for a good deal of the time, where our obligations lie; and our inclinations will largely be the same. Life would be impossible if we had to ponder at every turn whether what we were doing was right. We have straightforward 'duties of our station'. The teacher should meet his class as arranged, the doctor should be in his surgery at specified times, he should visit patients ill at home. So much is normally plain without further thought. But problems may arise if the teacher or doctor begin to wonder whether they are in the right vocation; and, in a host of other ways, variations from the normal course of things may cause grave uncertainty as to where the path of duty lies. We are acutely aware at present of difficult problems in medical ethics, concerning some forms of contraception or abortion, for example, or the use of life-supporting machines. Over this area, even in the normal round, and still more in areas of general policy or commitment, it is often hard to determine what we should do.

The wonder is, indeed, that so many notable ethical thinkers should have been so little aware of moral perplexity. Locke was not deeply troubled about it, being more concerned about the best way to cope with such evil-doers as there are. T. H. Green

what we believe at the time, and even when, under stress or criticism, we are induced to think again and this leads to a rapid change, this will in fact come about or it will not. We cannot decide that it will be other than it is.

It will thus be evident, I hope, how important it is not to conflate the process of deciding what we ought to do with doing it. This does not make belief unimportant – far from it. What we believe may have momentous consequences, it is sometimes disastrous. To seek the truth is itself one of our major obligations. But having sound opinions, even in morals or religion, is not the aspect of our existence which is directly the subject of moral evaluation, and that is because, in the last analysis, we cannot help what we think or choose to think other than we do. Moral worth depends on what we do when we can so choose.

This has not been sufficiently heeded by those who have recently brought the factor of choice in our experience into prominence. Their failure to do so has impoverished our understanding at the point where they have most to contribute, and has unfortunate practical effects. But we have now to add also that, while moral evaluation proper relates to conduct in a very special form, involving the choice I have described, there are other evaluations, those I have earlier denoted non-moral, of great importance. Having sound opinions and understanding is immensely important in itself as well as in its consequences. So is a concern for what is right, fortitude and resourcefulness, kindness and consideration, artistic sensitivity, charm and humour, for all of which and their like, at least in their effect on conduct, we may retain the term 'virtue'. But virtue in this sense, notwithstanding its importance as a quality of character, is still sharply different from properly moral attainment ensured when devotion to one's duty is not in line with our dominant inclinations.

1 cf. my 'Does the Good Will define its own content?' in *Ethics* 1948 and reproduced in my *Freedom and History*, Chapter 1.

CHAPTER IV

Freedom and Character

The main alternative to the view of freedom and accountability I have outlined is that usually known as 'self-determination'. This comes, in the form in which we are most familiar with it today, from nineteenth century idealism. This owed most to Hegel, drawing upon Kant. It was shown how the self, as subject in experience, permeates all experience and affects the self as agent as well as subject. Within the unity of our awareness our desires are viewed in relation to one another in a way that changes their strength and quality. This is a point of great importance, and the development of it in idealist philosophy presents a major part of the achievements of that movement of thought. I have noted already¹ the emphasis on various universes of desire, and there are also new and elevated desires possible for creatures with our sort of self-consciousness and unified awareness, desires which are not possible for brutes. This constitutes a very important sense of creativeness, expressed in art and science and religion as well as in morality. It is a distinctive part of what it is to be human. Its importance cannot be over-estimated, and we owe much, in psychology as in philosophy, to idealist writers, notably Green and Bradley, for their deployment of it.

It is another matter, however, whether this form of self-determination meets the requirements of freedom in the properly moral sense. There need be no dispute about the aptness of the term 'self-determination' in the context where it is used. It is as selves, as creatures aware of more than the passing state, that we are enabled to survey our situations more in their wholeness, to see the significance of immediate matters in a broader perspective, even though we may only do this imperfectly. Our rationality confers this special quality on our selfhood and so sets us apart from brutes. But when all this is allowed, it remains that the measure in which we modify our desires internally in this fashion, and thereby modify our conduct, is a feature of the sort of creatures we happen to be and varies from one person to another in a way which we do not modify in a final sense. Some are by nature more rational than others, and how our desires are modified in relation to each other in some particular case is ultimately a feature of the sort of person one happens to be. There may be sharp and dramatic changes within the sort of internal monitoring and modification indicated, but whether or not this happens is as inevitable as anything else in the last analysis. Self-determination, in the present sense, remains a form of determinism. However much we present its internal character, the result at any time cannot be other than it is.

the unity of our rational awareness comes about with the same unavoidableness as other processes in which one's intellect has the decisive part.

What Bradley, and so many others, including today many who owe little to the idealist tradition, have to offer, in their doctrine of 'self-determination', is only a superior form of determinism. The issue, in the last analysis, is inevitable. Moreover, the freedom which is envisaged here is a *matter of degree*. In practice, we are more or less rational. Our intellectual grasp varies much from one person to another, the range and resilience of the mind, its mastery, is more fully exhibited in high feats of the understanding, in science or related matters, and in creative art or literature. There is clearly freedom here of a remarkable order, we are immensely proud of such achievements in our long history. But the freedom presented here, in scintillating achievement, is less markedly evident in the work of more mundane minds and much reduced for those with diminished or retarded powers of understanding. The artist and the scientific innovator are free in a way which is not true of the rest of us.

Likewise in point of character too. We all recall the way Plato extolled the freedom of the man who had attained 'mastery' of himself in a balanced personality, and how much he derided the man who 'knows no order or necessity in life,' but he calls life as he conceives it pleasant and free and divinely blessed, and is ever faithful to it'.⁷ The just man excels in the 'internal management of his soul, his truest self and his truest possessions.... in the truest sense he sets his house in order, gaining the mastery over himself; and becoming on good terms with himself through discipline, he joins in harmony those different elements, like three terms in a musical scale – lowest and highest and intermediate, and any others that may lie between those – and binding together all these elements he moulds the many within him into one, temperate and harmonious'.⁸

But, in this celebrated passage, Plato is discussing the just man. The unjust is at the opposite extreme, and like the tyrant city 'full of extreme slavery and lack of freedom', 'It will ever be dragged about by a madness of desire, and be full of confusion and remorse'.⁹ We may likewise speak, in a more religious context, of the superior freedom of the saint, and of being 'the slave of Christ' whose service is also 'perfect freedom'. The attainment of some superior freedom in this way is a familiar theme in much religious literature besides the Bible. But it is the freedom of superior attainment, not the freedom which is *common to the sinner and the saint* and which they both exercise in the same way and to the same degree.

The self-determination of which Bradley is thinking is exhibited best in our highest attainments, depending on superior endowments and circumstances. It is the freedom of excellence and an essential feature of that excellence. It is *ipso facto* diminished in failure. The sinner is here much less free than the saint. All is a matter of degree, of more or less freedom. But moral freedom is not any mode or feature of attainment, it is neither attainment nor failure, but the essential condition of both. It does not depend, like other forms of creativity, on either gifts of nature or fortune, on endowment or circumstance. It is wholly by the self and of itself. There are no aids, no weighting; no one has the advantage over others, no one has here a start in life. Here, more than anywhere, we are all equal, in the awesome solitariness of our

within our way of life. For others, differently placed or otherwise endowed, some of the things we discount will be serious issues. They may, likewise, be little drawn to some bad things to which we are prone.

Our temptations vary; how far, in essentials, may not be easy to determine. Envy can take many forms and disguises. The libertine is not the only sensuous creature, and how we fare in the inner citadels of imagination and reverie, not only in respect to sensuous excesses but also to cruelty and sadism, may not always be reflected in outward proclivity. Even those who share a similar outlook and ideals may find themselves, through circumstance or temperament, exposed to very different strains and disturbances of character. Tolstoi and Gandhi had many major ideals in common, Gandhi admired Tolstoi's work and learnt from him. But Tolstoi allowed himself indulgences out of line with the commitment he himself advocated. Gandhi would have found these, to say the least, a trying deviation from the Spartan regime and discipline which had become normal for him. It does not follow that Gandhi (and Tolstoi) would not have had other occasions on which his duty, as he saw it, would be out of accord with his main inclinations at the time. He had sometimes to take a course which was highly unpopular with his followers and would seem to them a reversal and betrayal of the policy Gandhi himself had advocated. This would not be easy. It would be hard to determine how far Gandhi adhered to his course because of the toughness of his character or because this had been supplemented by a further free choice to rise to his duty in spite of conflicting predominant inclinations. It would be rash to assume that even Gandhi was never subject to serious strain of that sort.

If it should happen that a person's character had been so perfected that, either from natural conformity with what seemed the course of duty or because the awareness of duty ensured, as we saw might happen, conformity of inclination with it, then we would speak, in that context, of a 'holy will', not in a specifically religious sense but in the properly ethical sense which Kant had in mind in the use of that term which is now familiar in philosophy. It stands simply for a will which, notwithstanding the irksomeness of some course, would, by the constitution of one's character, conform to what was morally required.

The likelihood of there being a holy will is a little increased by the fact that resistance to temptation is apt to reduce the force of it. If we resist some addiction the force of it diminishes. It is easier to resist another time. To that extent the gap is closed between duty and inclination. To those who are already, by nature or circumstance, well endowed, their properly moral triumph will bring them closer to the stage that will dispense with the necessity – duty and inclination will wholly coincide. It is doubtful whether such a stage is reached by ordinary mortals. If it should be we would be disposed to look for special contributory factors, pre-eminently religious ones. But for most persons, including those most notably committed to high endeavour, the incidence of serious temptation will remain constant. We have seen that temptations vary. The good man and the saint, in becoming largely impervious to some temptations, may find themselves exposed to new ones incidental to their further attainment. Spiritual pride may become more virulent. Such has been the experience of notable saints. They have described

worth of fine qualities of character and the duty at all times to cultivate and strengthen them in all ways that are possible. Moral worth is not the only good even if it is superior, though not perhaps incommensurable with others. Virtues matter also. We can in any case count on there being lasting extensive need of properly moral endeavour in any state of ourselves that we can foresee in our present existence. If, as is so highly improbable, the gap should so close as to leave us all with only perfected holy wills, we can well leave that to providence. It is far from being our present state.

In these terms we can also correct one grave misrepresentation of the libertarian view. Some have supposed that the libertarian is committed to the notion of some once-for-all choice which covers all that we have to do as moral agents. I shall note again¹⁰ the way it is thought that the libertarian is forced to this strange position. It is certainly a very peculiar one, and I can make little of it. When was this momentous choice made? Presumably at some initial stage of our existence. But babies do not make moral choices, and they have no comprehension of such things. Did we choose before birth? If so we need to be told more about a purported previous existence. How is that established? The doctrine of *Karma* need not be completely deterministic; but when it is not, there is much in the course of one life, and not some one over-all choice, which determines our opportunities in another – and those are also genuine on their own account. Is the supreme initial choice a timeless one? That at least has been suggested, but it is peculiarly difficult to know how such a choice, even if it is meaningful at all, could be involved in the day-to-day occurrences of our present life as moral agents.

The libertarian, in short, is in very desperate straits if he has to fall back on the notion of a once-for-all choice. Moral philosophy ought to be concerned with what we normally find our moral experience to be like, and that is something which we have throughout the course of our mature existence. Some occasions are more momentous than others, and these may have moral features which have far-reaching effects on the subsequent course of our lives. But the decisions we take at such times are not always ethical ones, and, even when they are and grave moral issues are at stake, no one supposes that this exhausts our moral undertaking for the rest of our lives. Moral issues, some very grave and others less important, come in a variety of ways in the course of one life. There are moral claims to be heeded all the time, and properly moral choices to be made.

It is not in fact in a series of momentary choices that moral endeavour consists, even major moral crises extend further than that. We do not have eruptions into moral existence, we are moral agents all the time, even though there is much in the on-going course of our lives that is not explicitly moral or ethical. There are some ethical aspects to most that we do and these expand or contract into constantly changing deviations of duty and interest. Moral endeavour has to be sustained, as part of living, through fluctuations of aims and duties in the normal round, and even when it flares into the tensions of acute crises of moral doubt or indecision, this is not something wholly external imposed upon the normal tenor of one's life. It arises from normal living in its roundness; and its distinctness, as moral awareness and effort, is

not a blind and total disruption of everything else, it shapes itself in a special context, and the strains themselves will vary from moment to moment according to the course our purposing takes and the repercussions, favourable or otherwise, of forces upon which the moral purposing itself makes some impact. We have to take our lives (or living) as they are, not in mechanistic distortions but as the lives of persons in their wholeness, singling out what is distinctive in its proper way and its place. That is not a merging of everything in everything else, but a viewing of all as part of a living whole.

By failure to do that some have come, crudely in the repudiation of all distinctive continuous willing, and, more understandably, in the failure to note and recognise peculiarly moral choices and endeavour, to a grievous impoverishment of their total comprehension of our situation as human beings. They are apt to deny, in great sincerity, that they ever have the experience of making the moral choices I am describing. I suggest that, here as so often in the philosophy of mind, they are not looking in the right way. They are looking for the choice as some peculiar episode, with credentials entirely of its own, in detachment from the living way of things in a fluid situation in which moral endeavour takes its ever-changing course and may not always be prominent or present at all.

This brings us to a further consequence of the view I am commending – a very important one for practice. It will never be easy, if I am right, for anyone other than the agent himself to make assessments of moral worth with any precision. Evaluation is always a matter of sensitive judgment. But, in the estimation of properly moral worth, we have the complication of trying to determine, from the evidence available, how much is due to natural qualities of character and its strength, and how much a further moral effort is needed. Outwardly, the signs of one may not be very different from those of the other. In the case of moral failure the position is less acute. For we may have good reason here to conclude that the agent was aware of the wrongfulness of the course he was taking, or believed it to be wrong; and we may thus properly conclude that he failed to make the effort required to overcome his reluctance to take that course. Some measure of moral evil may thus be certainly presumed. But there is also much that remains obscure to the outside observer. Just what was the force of the contrary inclination, how much effort was made before reaching the point of capitulation? It is not futile to speculate about such things; we may know enough about a person's likes and aversions, and his character in a general way, to estimate, in some measure, the pull of the inclination that took him away from his duty. But even here also much of the story may be hidden.

But, if the action is estimable and thought to be so by the agent, the assessment is peculiarly difficult for the outsider, for he may find it very difficult to judge how much is due to the natural conformity of character with obligation, to virtue in the sense we have noted, and how much was due to reinforcement of natural disposition, or the curbing of it, in a moral effort to rise to the claims of duty in the special situation where our character, or our dominant inclinations, were not at the time conformable to that duty. The better we know the agent the greater is the chance that we can judge whether a free moral effort was required in that case – and how difficult

Against this background we may find ourselves reluctant to question the control we seem in fact to exercise in situations of seeming conflict of duty and inclination.

We can count then on the individual agent being properly aware of his own moral situation at the time and his own reaction to it. But it is otherwise when it comes to assessing the attainments and failures of other people. Not that we are quite at a loss. We can learn much and deduce how much comes from character and how much from further effort. But this is an area in which there are many uncertainties; and caution is the order of the day. This applies especially when it comes, not to making our own assessment, but to giving it expression. In conduct which is plainly laudable we need not stint ourselves, for it does not matter much for ordinary commendation how praise is apportioned between virtue and properly moral excellence. We cannot encourage the latter by praise, for it lies in the sphere beyond the range of that sort of influence. But praise is not solely for encouragement. It has its own place in the fittingness of personal relations and the sharing of joy. The recipient can apportion it as seems best, if at all.

In this case, as in condemnation, there is also the affirmation and extolling of various standards of excellence in general terms, irrespective of the bestowing of particular praise. This presents no problem, beyond the practical one of what is most effective. We can praise and condemn in that mode. The preacher and the educator need have no qualms about the general denunciation of evil practices. It is when it comes to specific censure that we have problems, for, in directing our condemnation to an individual case, the determination of the degree of depravity is not simple or easy. How much is due to wrong-headed ideas, to the devil truly appearing as an angel of light, to blindness or fanaticism for which, at some stage, we may be to blame, but which has us now firmly in the power of its torrent, how much of the inner story of passion, fear and frustration do we know, what intimation can there be of partial but not successful resistance to evil? In the light of such hindrances to our total understanding of a situation, we need to be very careful how we judge. Some condemnation there must be, not merely for discipline or the general denunciation of evil practices and exposure of them, and not merely in repugnance to bad traits of character, but also in downright condemnation of moral evil. For here also there is a fittingness and maintenance of personal relations of integrity and respect. We owe it to one another to speak the truth in love.

There is usually much aversion to this, most of all in intimate contact. That is partly due to our own failures and imperfections of character. We know too well, and have been well taught, how easy it is to be preoccupied with the mote in a brother's eye. In censure it is hard not to be 'holier than thou' or without pity and sensitivity. Self-righteousness and pride masquerade so easily as righteous indignation. For these and like reasons sensitive persons will be much averse to censure, but it does not follow that it is always out of place. The mode and style of it a sensitive person will take great pains to discover, but, as in remorse, there must be no cover for guilt, it must work its dread way into our hearts, in dismay and distress before a proper cleansing is possible. Love itself demands that there be this starkness within the ambit of it. Evil must be seen as it is, in ourselves or others, it must be confronted.

important way, in the setting of the situation in which we are morally put to the test. It is how we fare in this test that matters explicitly in the moral sense, not any other evaluation.

This is how we are sometimes forced to withhold moral condemnation of persons who have done what seems to us morally bad or wrong. We may have grounds for supposing that they themselves thought they were on the right course. It may sometimes be hard for us to concede this. Men appear, with high intentions, to have tortured other persons on the rack, to have burned them as witches or imposed on them spiritual penalties which would at least have distressed or terrified the victims themselves. Political causes have led, in the case of some seemingly sincere people, to unspeakable atrocities. Richelieu, as depicted by Aldous Huxley in his *Grey Eminence*, is a notable instance. He knew better than most the barbarism which the Thirty Years War unleashed, but he persisted, genuinely idealistic and saintly person though he seemed to be, in a course which extended that war. There seems indeed to be little limit to what we may on occasion come to consider our duty.

To this we must reply, as earlier, that we do not 'sin in ignorance', though we may do great harm. We may also take a great deal of convincing that certain atrocious things were done in what seemed to the perpetrators of them the course of duty. Allowance must be made for turmoil and confusion, especially in major political conflict and war. With hindsight we may judge such matters with more sensitivity and balance than the crude black and white they tend to present at the time. Even so there is a limit, however uncertain its edges may be. It would be hard to convince us that Hitler and his associates were unaware of the wickedness of what they did. But even here, hard though it may seem to say so, we have to remind ourselves that the full story, as it is for God, may not be altogether what it seems to us. The blindness of fanaticism is no monopoly of our own age. Much of it may be found in holy scripture.

Whatever we make of the facts of particular cases and major upheavals, the point for us now is that neither soundness of opinion, nor the estimable, or the vile, nature of the ends we set out to accomplish, are the immediate determinants of moral worth. They are an indispensable feature of the situation in the fullness of its ethical character, but moral assessment turns on the degree of adherence to the course we ourselves deem to be right at the time, and on that alone; for that is all that we fully and finally have in our control in the way that makes properly moral assessment meaningful, as stressed already.

It will follow also that moral worth is a matter of degree, depending on the effort required and made to conform with what our obligations seem to require. Our own natures may, in some cases, conform so closely already to what we think we ought to do that only a mild additional effort is needed. At the other extreme it may be of great severity, and this, as I have insisted, will vary a great deal from one situation and person to another. In our actual assessment we have also to remember, if we judge any others than ourselves, that the struggle with evil may have been hard before the ultimate surrender, and that this goes also into the final reckoning.

But it is the effort that matters, however required, for outwardly momentous

of good traits of character, the eradication of the bad, should be a prime concern. Even when there is little or nothing we can specifically do to encourage good qualities of character and deepen sensitivity to them, it remains important to recognise and appreciate them. This is a distinctive part of a close personal relationship, and it has its place on the broader canvas of our general role in the world around us. There is also the enrichment of life in other non-moral values which we may enjoy ourselves or encourage in others, health and happiness and fulfilment, to keep to very general terms. Ethical thinking will be concerned with all these, and the ways they may be promoted. There will still be depth and richness and meaning, even in the absence of moral good and bad. Life will not entirely lose its savour. There will be attainment, hope and expectation. Art and discovery will have their point, understanding will remain significant, we can learn from Spinoza when Pelagius is no longer relevant.

Even so, there will be a deep, underlying forlornness in all our concerns and undertakings. At no point can anything eventually be other than it is. If we have rich and satisfying lives, that is fine; if we are deprived and wretched, there is little, nothing in the last analysis, we can do about it. All will be as it is anyway. Within the peculiar proclivities and powers we have, there will be much activity, the poet will agonize, in 'a fine frenzy', to get the right word, the musician to make his melody sweet and harmonious, the scholar and scientist to make their discoveries, we shall have tender love, as also envy and hate. Some will set themselves to improve their own lot and that of others, there will be kindness and charity and earnest endeavour, as also destructiveness, perversity and hate. But in all these respects, good and bad alike, we shall do as we do subject to whatever propensities we happen to have; there is nothing, in the last analysis, we can do to change one jot of our own lives or the general course of things. It will all flow in its predetermined way from what there is already. We may not think of ourselves as the pawns of fate, and we certainly need not subscribe to physical determinism. Mental existence will play its own part in the course it takes. Intelligence will count, and those who excel may rejoice in that and take pride in it. But whether or not this happens is ultimately out of our hands. There may be no blind fate, but nothing can be finally other than it is. We have our destiny, and we shall be carried along with it, for good or ill; but all that lies ahead, loud though we may protest and agitate, that very agitation itself is as unavoidable as all there is now; the resignation, apathy, or acceptance which such thoughts may prompt will be just part of the general inevitability of all things. There is, at least, nothing that we ourselves can genuinely change.

To me this is itself a sad and daunting reflection. We are co-workers only in a very restricted sense. However much our own natures and understanding are involved, there remains a gloomy and unrelieved inevitability about all that we are and do, we have no genuine part of our own to play, we modify nothing in and of ourselves, for all the selfhood that we have is itself embodied exhaustively in the propensities that have come together to make us the persons we are.

Thoughts of this kind, extended in further religious or metaphysical systems, have been extensively accountable for the apathy and distressful resignation of many peoples down the ages, poverty and misery must be endured in the knowledge that

should refer to the account given by Christopher Isherwood of prisoners in the Garcia Morena prison in Ecuador who, in spite of appalling conditions, continued to be treated as human beings and would themselves resent being regarded 'as misfits or types or cases'. They had done wrong and they knew it.

Our attitude to ourselves, and to one another, will need to be drastically altered if we are unable to regard ourselves as genuinely free and responsible agents, even though other distinctions of value will have their place. I believe that we are free and responsible, and also that it is immensely important, in the present state of society and culture and in the new perils of scientific and technological advances, to affirm the responsibility of individual persons. This is limited, but we are not impotent in the world around us. There are also many further implications, for religion and metaphysics, of the view I have been presenting. I shall return to these, but in the meantime I wish to look more closely at some of the particular points of importance that have been made in recent controversy about responsibility and freedom.

References

- 1 p. 39.
- 2 *Ethical Studies*, p. 32.
- 3 *ibid.*, p. 32.
- 4 *op.cit.*, p. 32.
- 5 *ibid.*, p. 36.
- 6 *ibid.*, p. 33.
- 7 *Republic*, Book VIII, 561. (I quote A. D. Lindsay's translation, J. M. Dent and Sons, publishers, here and later.)
- 8 *op.cit.*, Book IV, 443.
- 9 *ibid.*, 577.
- 10 In chapters 9 and 10 and in the final volume in this series.
- 11 *Contemporary British Philosophy*, Volume III, Ed. H. D. Lewis, pp. 289–309.

CHAPTER V

Choices

I have been setting out the view that moral responsibility requires a choice between fully open alternatives, a choice such that it could be different even though everything else remained the same. I have tried to cope with some of the major difficulties which this view presents. But there is much in the recent literature of the subject of which further account must be taken, and especially the grave misgiving which many have about the alleged appeal to an immediate experience of making peculiarly moral choices of this kind from time to time as occasion requires.

This misgiving has been very clearly and effectively expressed again by Professor Nowell-Smith in two related articles in *Mind* which seem to me peculiarly important for the subject today, as they sum up and present approaches to these topics which are widely current today and may be found implicit in many discussions which are not as clear and comprehensive as the views advanced by Nowell-Smith. The first paper, entitled 'Free Will and Moral Responsibility',¹ is an excellent presentation of the view I have already noted, namely that 'there is no such thing as moral value, as such',² but that certain actions can be brought about or prevented by praise or blame or other rewards and punishment. We have no need in this context to look beyond actions 'that we believe to be alterable in this way'.³ I have indicated already why I believe that this falls very far short of what we have in mind when we speak of morally good or bad by whatever precise designation we note them. I turn therefore to the sequel to Professor Nowell-Smith's first article, his 'Determinists and Libertarians',⁴ and shall be concerned especially with the difficulty he finds in the notion of having immediate awareness of the open nature of some of the choices we make.

Our starting point here is the old perplexity about the deep and seemingly irreconcilable disagreements of philosophers. What seems quite evident to one is totally false or senseless to another equally competent person. The solution which Nowell-Smith suggests is that we fall into confusion as between different levels at which our utterances may be made. There are 'statements made in ordinary language which, at the common sense level, seem to be obviously true'.⁵ Then there are philosophical statements, with words like 'potency', 'the self' etc. which go well beyond ordinary language. There is no need to condemn these. There may be a case for some of them, we are not confined to ordinary language. Finally, we have statements that lie half-way between the other two, and this is where confusion is engendered, for the half-way statements can deceive us into taking statements made at one level, the philosophical one, as if they belonged to the common-sense level.

the way certain things happen. Even the old salt who feels in his bones, or at one glance at the sky, that there is a change in the weather, relies in essentials on the same procedures, even if he is not well able to set them out.

This will apply also to the choices we normally make. These come, in the final account, out of the state of our characters — our 'make-up' as we loosely say — at the time. They are in the last resort determined, although this leaves room for speaking quite properly of making a choice. The choice will turn on the way our likes and dislikes sort themselves out at the time, in the way already described. We are free in such matters because, subject to the circumstances, what we do depends on what we are like, and in this way we can quite properly say that we are ourselves making the choice.

To be quite explicit there are two matters we should distinguish here, the circumstances and our own state of mind. To determine what we can choose we have to establish what is outwardly or physically possible. I cannot choose to leap over a wall that is not there, or choose a pear if there are none on the plate. But if there is a wall or a pear, and I am not inhibited by other physical conditions, it makes good sense, up to a point, to say that I have a choice. But my physical capacities also come in. I cannot choose to leap over a wall that is ten feet high. This, in turn, may be understood in two ways. I am physically incapable of leaping that high, and also we are normally, perhaps invariably, incapable of setting ourselves or willing to do what we are convinced we cannot accomplish. Both these are subsidiary matters and refer to a freedom of choice which we may usefully designate as such, but which is not to be confused with the choice we make internally in the way our desires align themselves in relation to one another to induce the movement of reaching for the pear. Among the conditions which affect the internal alignment are thoughts like 'If I choose the peach this will make the child unhappy, and that choice is therefore not open to me'. Physically I can reach for the peach quite easily, but being a sensible person not given to teasing a child, I just cannot do that. 'I am not free', we might say, but this turns on what sort of person I am and the alignment of my thoughts and desires at the time. It presents no problem beyond that, any more than my prudence or fear if I am threatened. The issue is not in the last resort in doubt; and what the permutations are, and in what context we find it appropriate to speak of choosing, is settled, as far as it can be, by observation and principles established already.

In a very general sense we may be said to be choosing all the time, all our conduct is choice, since it flows from the alignment from moment to moment of our likes and our understanding of our situation. It is what we do in this way, it depends on us and not on external compulsion. Even under threat, and in circumstances where it would not be thought proper or prudent to defy the threat and in which I might then sensibly say 'I had no choice, he had the gun at my head', it would still be literally possible to defy the threat. It would be my doing if I did so and earned our praise for heroism or regret for foolhardiness. In all such cases, where we might say that in the last analysis I was free — it was up to me — there are other aspects of the total situation in which I could most appropriately say that I was not free — 'I had no choice, the gunman had me covered'. Convention and convenience determine these variations in

character about which we learn from our own experience and that of others who observe us. In practice this is not always possible, and we are sometimes wrong. But in all such cases we are concerned with aptitudes and dispositions. There is no immediate awareness of these. But the free choice of the libertarian *falls altogether outside such assessments*.

Nowell-Smith proceeds within the ambit of a determinist scheme of things and the sorts of modalities, ultimately relative to the degree of our knowledge, of which this allows. If this is the only way we may speak of capacities, or if the way we normally establish what is possible is presumed to be the only way, then the libertarian has been neatly put out of court. He cannot, for logical reasons, be aware of what he claims to be aware of. He cannot have the benefit of the doubt, like someone who claims to have seen an unlikely monster. For a possibility is not a thing in that sense. 'The issue is clearly concerned with the logical role of the modal words "can" and "could"; and, it is surely clear that this issue could not be settled by introspection'⁷. We can dismiss the libertarian without more ado as we would a person who claimed to see a square-circle.

But the claim that we are able to make free moral choices is not in the class of the powers we acquire and exercise in the normal way. It refers to a unique situation, in which capacities and like dispositions figure only in setting the situation within which a moral choice is made. There is no question of trying to settle how far we are endowed with a power of some special kind with which to resist temptation. There just is no such endowment, and it is a travesty of the libertarian's claim to insist that he is just invoking one. The terms we use are often common to those we have in normal modal contexts, and this is not easy to avoid without becoming cumbersome in day to day talk. But no one should be misled by that. It should be quite plain, from the excellent literature of the subject, that there is no invoking of a measurable proclivity in the normal way. It is oneself making a choice to do one's duty, or not to do it, in a way that is not itself affected by any propensity or power in one's own make-up. We cannot rule this out or the awareness of it because it is out of line with modalities and predictions in other contexts. We can only ask whether in fact we do make the choices in question. There is certainly nothing to rule them out.

Nowell-Smith finds further support for his case in the metaphysical nature of the terms in which the libertarian case is sometimes set out — 'formed character', 'conative dispositions' etc. But recent libertarians have no monopoly of mildly technical terms of this sort; and they usually write with exceptional clarity. I doubt whether any competent person is misled, and if the requirement to stay within ordinary language is mandatory, we could well get by with words like 'the sort of person I am'. The point for Nowell-Smith is that terms like 'formed character', 'embedded', as he alleges not very convincingly for me, 'in a large and complex mass of psychological theory', involve metaphysics. 'But a metaphysician is not a reporter; he is an interpreter of what he "sees"; and it is over the interpretation that philosophical disputes arise'.⁸

This seems to me a very unprofitable line. Nowell-Smith himself speaks of 'interpreting what he "sees"'. We do not build our metaphysics out of nothing, and

awareness of them. They are not the warring forces, each with its power fixed in itself, of which Bradley spoke so scathingly in his famous chapter.¹¹ Determinists have themselves been only too willing to go along with Green and Bradley in this matter, and they have indeed made these particular insistences of idealist writers central to their own case for moral freedom as self-determination within an essentially determinist framework, in line with the course the idealists themselves prescribed. This has been sufficiently noted already. But leading libertarians have also been as willing as any to go along with idealist insights here, indeed those are commended with vigour and persistence by the libertarian whose work Nowell-Smith has especially in mind here, namely C. A. Campbell. He took his start from considerable acceptance of the idealist teaching in which he was nurtured, and especially in his account of self-realisation in his major works and specifically in articles like 'Moral Intuition and the Principle of Self-realisation'¹² and 'Moral and Non-Moral Values',¹³ pre-eminently the latter which should be essential reading for all who concern themselves with these matters.

The submission which Nowell-Smith makes, very wide of the mark in this case, is that the libertarian, starting with a mechanical analogy, conceives of the alleged effort of will as another mechanical force of precisely the same nature as the others. It is just one further power with which we are endowed. 'If the mechanical analogy is correct', we are told, 'it would seem to be axiomatic that anything which opposes or reinforces a force must be another force'.¹⁴

But 'force' is ambiguous here. If it means an additional force of like nature to the alleged mechanical forces, it can only be some special part of our natural endowment, and it can be pointed out, as Nowell-Smith does, that any suggestion that the effort might have been stronger leads to the postulation of some yet further endowment in the form of a further superior force as part of our total mechanical endowment. But apart from the total misrepresentation of Campbell and other libertarians, in the ascription to them of mechanistic views of motives and character which they have been themselves forward in repudiating, the idea of a free effort of will is totally travestied.

One of the things on which Campbell has been most insistent is that the moral effort of will is not in the least like the exercise of some other measurable capacity. This is the central theme of his important, but not sufficiently heeded, paper on 'The Psychology of Effort of Will'.¹⁵ The attempts of Mc Dougall and others to align the effort of will with other conative tendencies, and thereby make it explicable in a scientific or some similar way, is vigorously repudiated in favour of the view that there is nothing to be said about the moral effort other than that the agent makes it in a way which consists entirely in his making it without pre-determining conditions of any sort, beyond the conditions which set the situation which requires the choice – and that, for this reason especially, the agent cannot fail to be aware of making, or failing to make, at least adequately, the effort to comply with what seems to him morally required.

Attention is also drawn to some similarities in the possible predictability of action on a determinist and indeterminist view. We can be broadly certain of how people's

What matters is that character, however we understand it and its operation, is a determinant of our likes and dislikes, our feelings, hopes, expectations etc. at a particular time and thereby also of what we shall do in the absence of conditions which make a contrary choice understandable, such as a conflicting claim of duty.

In a final observation Nowell-Smith offers an attractive explanation of the way the self seems to disavow certain elements in its own nature, but not by way of the resistance to them which the libertarian claims. He is not thinking of the normal or familiar conflict of ingredients in our nature, as that would hardly match up to the force of the opposition of the self to what seems to be also its nature as the libertarian treats it. He is not thinking of cases where 'I simply *want* to do two incompatible things'.¹⁸ It is rather that there are certain cravings which 'conflict with my general conception of what is best for me, of the sort of life that I ought to lead!'¹⁹ They become 'ruling passions', 'forces or tyrants',²⁰ and they may be likened to 'external forces or hostile beings'.²¹ This is very plausible and might have a place of importance in the study of character, but it hardly coincides with what we have normally in mind in moral condemnation – of ourselves or others.

In support of his proposal Nowell-Smith insists that 'Conscientiousness and its opposite are no doubt very important and in some ways peculiar and puzzling characteristics; but they are characteristics none the less'.²² This overlooks the two meanings which 'conscientiousness' may have as either highminded traits of character and virtues, including, as we have seen, being attracted to one's duty as such, or as the performance of duty in ways which are out of accord with one's character as a whole. The genuineness of the former and its importance should not obscure for us the distinctively significant conscientiousness of properly moral action which is not a characteristic, but a crucial untrammelled choice and sustaining of purpose – with all the natural odds against it.

The views advanced by Nowell-Smith, as I have been noticing them, provide an excellent focus for much that we find in a spate of recent writings on freedom and accountability. This is hardly the place to survey such work in detail. But I append briefly here some typical examples of the course such discussion has taken as it bears on the main submissions made hitherto in this study.

In recent discussions of the libertarian view of freedom there appear to be two major and converging themes. One is concerned with the notion of the agent in moral action as more than the system of one's inclinations or dispositions or the course of one's life. In one place such a self is actually described as 'the timeless subject of ideas'.²³ The idea of a 'pure ego' has certainly been thought of in that way, and it is notoriously difficult to see how a self which is 'transcendental' to that extent could be operative in the course of the temporal existence we have. How God can be said to be active in history and human experience is quite another matter, involving consideration of the peculiar transcendence of God, which has no immediate relevance here. We make our ethical choices as part of the on-going process of our lives here and now, and although philosophers may toy, for speculative purposes, with the notion of some once-for-all choice, possibly before our birth in this world, we are in fact held accountable, praised or blamed, expressly for what we have done

choose irrespective of the way our likes and dislikes arrange themselves at some time when the total situation is such as to make this choice meaningful in the way indicated earlier.

In the paper to which I have alluded already,²⁶ Professor Ebersole brings the two themes I have noted very close together. He first sets out, very soundly it seems to me, what 'ordinary usage' or, as he also puts it, what 'the ordinary intelligent, and intelligible person who is uncontaminated by philosophy or science' insists upon as the conditions of moral praise or blame and responsibility. The main condition is freedom of choice between various desires leading to action. But this need not be at the time of action or immediately preceding it. Our actions are determined by motives in the form of dispositions. But for an action to be accountable there must be somewhere, among its antecedents, a choice that was not itself causally determined. I should have myself said that, in that case, it was for the initial choice that we were accountable. But we can let that go, for Ebersole thinks there is a fatal flaw in the notion of a 'choice which is wholly or partly undetermined'. For it cannot be enough that 'the choice be uncaused'. That is too negative and can only be relevant if 'the person himself "threw the balance" one way or the other in the act of choosing'.²⁶ That, however, cannot be the case.

This is because a person or agent, capable of affecting the balance as required 'is not constituted by a sequence of past events, and dispositions'. Nothing will serve but 'the self, the ego, the person acting presumably not through the past but directly on the undetermined desire'. Here 'the commonsense man completes his story', and the philosopher taking it up 'with simple-minded ontology' brings us to the notion of a 'timeless subject' or a 'pure ego' which is 'a pathetic piece of metaphor' or mythology. Adherence to our ordinary thought on the subject must fail.

There is, it is also urged, 'another condition for the ordinary use of "free" ' which 'reinforces the conclusion that the conversational term "free" is never applicable'.²⁷ This is 'that free choices are data of experience' — 'I recognize a free choice when I experience one',²⁸ I recognize the 'wavering, considering, and final resolution as the free act'. This however is impossible, firstly and not too impressively it seems to me, because we might seem to have such a recognition when we do things under hypnosis. We realize later that we were not in fact free. There are, however, I submit, very peculiar conditions attaching to states of hypnosis, and, one might add, of dreams where we may seem also conscious of acting freely. We have good reasons for distinguishing between such states and normal waking consciousness; and to allow highly restricted abnormal situations to outweigh the evidence of full many-sided waking awareness seems very presumptuous to say the least. The main weight must surely rest on what we clearly find to be the case in normal experience, however hard it may be to account for the exceptions.

Two further arguments are adduced. Firstly, as the undetermined choice affecting our present action may precede the action by a considerable time, we may have little awareness of it at the time of the action for which we are accountable, indeed it may have been obliterated, sunk deep into our unconsciousness. The moral of this is, I submit, that it is for the original free choice and for any aspects of our present

dispositions are those of the person who also lives through a distinctive moral situation and makes open choices. These choices are not themselves affected by praise or blame, but the subsequent frame of mind of the agent will be and it is most appropriate that it should and that he be induced to ponder it and make a sound assessment of himself in his total situation.

Independently of radical issues of this sort, there seems no reason why a person who has, in the exercise of genuinely open choice, made a bad choice should not find his motives or dispositions, and his actual state of mind at some further time, affected by the thought of the punishment which he or others have suffered. The force of some temptation may be much weakened in this way or perhaps eliminated altogether. This is not a properly moral gain, and may not even be a virtue unless the upholder of the reformatory theory is right in supposing that punishment may bring about a genuine change of heart. But it establishes at least that punishment is not precluded from bringing about the practical gain expected of it even though the offender has erred in the exercise of untrammelled freedom. There are things that matter besides moral attainment, and the character and practical attitudes of members of society are one of them. Punishment does not fail of its practical importance on a libertarian view.

Nor does remorse. Ebersole himself stresses that remorse is not just an occasional pang but a more abiding attitude of mind – a ‘prospensity’ – which may affect future conduct. But even so it is directed in the first place to the past occasion and finds its significance there. It is an inherently worthwhile change of attitude to what we have done and is not reducible to resolve about future conduct. This is overlooked, as is the basic meaning of condemnation, by oneself or others, in relating moral condemnation expressly to ‘traits and dispositions which may be acquired and lost’.³¹ Initially, moral condemnation is the recognition of the badness of what has been done.

Ebersole’s main objection to the retributivist view is that he thinks (rightly, in my view, but contrary to famous advocates of that view like Bradley) that it presupposes a strictly undetermined choice. The terms which reflect retribution ‘are never applicable because there are no “free choices” in the ordinary sense of “free”’. ‘My conclusion,’ he adds ‘is that we cannot rely on common-sense beliefs’.³² In my own view we are unwise to stray too far from the common-sense view in this matter.

From this point Ebersole takes the familiar alternative of interpreting freedom, in the sense required in moral condemnation, in terms of someone being ‘in such a state that he will favourably respond to condemnation’.³³ The past wrong is only needed as a clue to this condition. We look soberly to what is required to ‘deter’ or to modify future conduct in some like way. This does not, it seems, require either determinism or indeterminism, though the former is favoured. Moral considerations are irrelevant to that controversy, its provenance is elsewhere in the analysis of scientific method.³⁴

This is closely in line with the proneness of very many writers on moral responsibility of late to concentrate attention on the meaning of freedom which we would find most common in ordinary parlance, as if there were only one major sense in which we were free, and then offer this as the kind of freedom required by our moral accountability, in total disregard of the peculiarity of moral evaluation and the

an act, in these terms, 'is both necessary (for a spectator, or for the agent on subsequent reflection) and free (for the agent at the unreflective moment of action).'⁴⁵ This brings out the affinity of this kind of approach to Hegelian and post-Hegelian idealism where it is often stressed that, without precluding the generalizations of statistical studies, there can be no complete prediction of specific actions, as the unity of consciousness may make a difference up to the final moment of decision. Like others Raphael is unhappy with the restriction of free will 'to situations of moral "temptation", where pressing desires conflict with thought of duty'.⁴⁶ This is where I think the strength of the libertarian case is under-estimated. It is for the same reason that Mr. Justus Hartnack exclaims that 'If it should be maintained that to be free means to go against all my wishes it would be absurd'.⁴⁷ It only seems absurd if we fail to take account of situations in which we are challenged by a claim of duty to which we may or may not respond.

The assimilation of moral choice to other choices is also much underlined in the argument of Professor W. I. Matson who complains⁴⁸ that if an action is independent 'of the agent's character as so far formed' it must be because we have a power or capacity to act in that way. But this capacity must be either innate or acquired. If innate it is part of our nature, if acquired we must have had the capacity to so acquire it – and so ad infinitum. In this as in the other instances I have cited there seems to be disregard of our own consciousness, as beings who are more than character or course of events, of making the very special and completely open choice which is only intelligible in the light of the distinctness and inwardness of persons outlined already.

Professor Matson comes to a bolder conclusion than the other writers I have noted, namely that moral responsibility, if not 'a fiction concocted in the schools', 'refers to a very prevalent mode of moral thinking which I consider pernicious', and he points instead 'to Marcus Aurelius, to Spinoza, and to that paradigm of kindly humanity, Uncle Toby, who opined that the best thing to do was to "wipe it up, and say no more about it"'.⁴⁹ There is much sense in this once we conclude that the sort of person one is at the time or one's character is invariably decisive in the course of our conduct. Many sociologists have come today to the same conclusion, notably Lady Barbara Wootton who is strongly attracted to the view that 'all our difficulties would, however, disappear, if we could but dispense with the whole idea of responsibility altogether'.⁵⁰ It does not follow, as I have stressed, that all evaluation goes by the board, much less that there will not be legal and social contexts in which we may continue to speak of responsibility, for social purposes, along the lines indicated by Professor Nowell-Smith. But the properly moral notion of responsibility and the related notions of guilt and remorse will require drastic modification and have perhaps to be abandoned altogether. I am not convinced that this is the proper course, and I shall be maintaining later that these radical ethical ideas, made intelligible by proper understanding of the self and its freedom, are indispensable for our appreciation of our proper relations to one another and to God.

References

- 1 *Mind*, January 1948.
- 2 *op.cit.*, p. 55

CHAPTER VI

Motive and Intention

The ideas of motive and intention have played an important part, in recent years especially, in the discussion of moral evaluation. This is not surprising, for intention is usually thought to include the whole or some important part of what an agent anticipates as the result of his action, what he sets out to accomplish; and it seems evident that what a person supposes will come about in the course of his conduct is in some way a main consideration in the evaluation of what he is doing. The intention, thought of in this way, is sometimes thought to include only the aim the agent has especially in mind and the means directly relevant to it. The remainder will be consequences of our conduct in which we are not so expressly interested but which we must recognise and accept as unavoidable side effects of what we are more explicitly anxious to achieve.

On the view which I have been defending, intention in the present sense, in either its limited or more comprehensive form, is only indirectly relevant to estimation of moral worth, namely as establishing what the agent thinks is the course of his duty and the extent to which this deviates from what he most wants to do on the whole at the time. The proper moral worth will turn on the way he exercises his freedom of undetermined choice on the occasions when there is such deviation. If, for example, I believe my action will cause someone pain, that tells heavily against its being my duty and will need substantial compensation in other ways if I am still to consider it my duty to do it. In most cases it will also much affect what I want.

In this context it seems evident that our reckoning must be with the intention in the broader sense. For it would normally be thought to be unreasonable to overlook major consequences of one's action, in estimating its conformity with our obligations, simply because we are not explicitly concerned with them. If what we hope to achieve is likely to have a disastrous accompaniment, that would tell heavily against its being in the line of duty. If, for example, I thought my view would be much improved by cutting down a large tree at the foot of my garden, there might seem to be nothing wrong in my setting out to do so. But this would not be the case if there was a likelihood that the tree would fall across the road in the way of traffic, and no precautions were taken. My aim in building a dam to create a reservoir to drain away water for a factory may be quite in order in itself, but not if it seriously diminishes the water supply of farms lower down the valley. It may not be part of my own concern that I should damage the farms, but I am not entitled for that reason to leave their fate

spur us to more resolute efforts to correct our own judgments and bring our thoughts into as close a conformity as we can with what is in fact the case. At any particular time we have to be guided by such opinions as we have, in consultation with others, formed by that time. But that is no bar to our passing our opinions under constant review to guard against error and persist in the pursuit of truth. In this enterprise it is always an advantage to bear in mind that there is an objective truth to be sought after in our opinions, which also we have often good reason to believe are in line with the truth.

I shall not discuss this further here, as I have already considered it at length in my paper (first published in *Mind* 1945) on 'Obedience to Conscience' and related papers assembled in my book *Morals and Revelation*.

A further advantage of the insistence on objective truth is that it makes for tolerance, in part by reminding us of our own fallibility and also through the better realization that others who disagree with us may in fact be right and also holding their opinions, whether sound or not, with the same sincerity and the same devotion to what they understand to be their duty. The pacifist does not, for this reason, have to impugn the moral integrity of the soldier, or the soldier that of the pacifist. In one sense the one will have to tell the other that he has not done his duty, or that what he does is wrong; one or the other will have failed to meet what the situation requires. But that is no bar to their recognising one another's integrity and scruples. In highly complicated matters there is much to be said on both sides; and, as we have no monopoly of wisdom, so we have no monopoly of the conscientious devotion to duty as we see it on which properly moral worth depends. To pursue the wrong course is not *ipso facto* morally evil.

It is also possible to pursue the proper course, to do what we ought, for the wrong reasons, which, if not bad, are morally worthless. This was much stressed in debates earlier this century about 'the subjectively right act' and 'the objectively right act'. We may do the latter without being properly concerned about its rightness. It may be to our advantage to do right, honesty may pay, and it may be that this is what counts with us even when we are convinced that what we do is right. This is why it was often said, in the debates mentioned, that it was the motive which mattered, or mattered mainly, in the estimation of moral worth. But what was understood by 'the motive' in such discussions was not always clear.

The motive, on some views, would be understood in these contexts as that part of the intention, understood as the whole of what we envisage as the likely result of our action, which especially appeals to us and for the sake of which we adopt a particular course. A person may exhaust himself canvassing during an election, and make many speeches, but his motive is to get himself (or someone else) elected. Another may commit a felony but his motive may be to feed his starving family, as it may also be to enrich himself. The motive in this sense is plainly important, but it is not always clear just in what way it is important.

Our assessment would clearly be affected in some sense by whether a man robbed a bank to succour his destitute family or did so to live it up on an extended holiday or to be free of embarrassing debts. The latter thought, and quite plainly the first, would

to being very uneasy about this, hoping that a philosophical genius will some day reconcile our thought about freedom and responsibility with acceptance of the law of causality.¹

Some ingenious convolutions, and many cross-purposes, in the spate of ethical thinking to which I am alluding, could have been avoided if closer heed had been paid to the exclusiveness of the idea of obligation, and the special freedom and responsibility associated with it, in the determination of properly moral worth. It was a great mistake to extend this complex of ideas to other modes of evaluation where they have no place. Ross is quite right in asserting that we cannot summon up sorrow and love at will and that all that we can do, in the way obligation requires, is set ourselves to act in ways which will include the cultivation of appropriate attitudes. But he gave serious hostages to fortune when he included such attitudes of mind as love or hate directly in the determination of moral worth. This opened the way to thoughts of choosing to act from a certain motive etc. If we choose in that context it is only in a very attenuated way, for the motive itself is here the determining factor. We have to break away from the context in which our actions flow from motives, in the sense of emotions and desires, to an area of choice which is not so determined if we are to separate the right performance, as Ross seems concerned to do, from what we cannot modify at will on any occasion.

It does not follow that what we actually accomplish, and even more what we set out to do, is without relevance to estimations of our worth in non-moral ways. Directly, the actual effects of our conduct do not affect our quality as agents, for much may come about which we could not be expected to anticipate. But indirectly the course of the events we set in train provides major clues to what we intend to happen or to tolerate when not in itself to one's purpose. That is a major determinant of what sort of persons we are, although there will be other ingredients. What we are, in various ways in this context, will be good or bad (or indifferent) in various measures just in virtue of what in fact we are, complicated and variable as it is, without our being able to modify what it is directly at any time, as in the obvious cases of intellectual, aesthetic or physical attainment. It is important therefore not to complicate our understanding of such matters, and set ourselves wheeling from one implausible extreme to the other, by importation into them of suppositions which can only be properly meaningful in the context of the sort of choice, in confrontation with a claim of duty, which is not determined by one's character, or by anything other than the agent's making it, except in the sense not directly relevant here of helping, in association with our understanding of our duties, to set the occasion for choices of that sort.

The sort of debates which held the centre of the stage at the time the deontologists, including the so-called Oxford intuitionists, were at the height of their influence have, to my mind, a lasting place in ethical thinking. They are much underestimated at present, and we neglect them to our cost. The writers in question had major insights, and their concern to set these out effectively is a source of profound illumination, as much in their mistakes as in their undoubted achievement. It is with a major, but understandable, error that I have been concerned just now. I have been so because I

disposition as the explanation of our conduct and, in that way, the exclusion of some counter-acting stronger disposition, the action is made what it is by the disposition manifested in it. To that extent it still remains true that the agent could not help it. To violate that, we have to think of conduct which is not subject to any dispositional determination, the open choice to be found in the circumstances where the libertarian detects it.

There has been much discussion of late of the way a disposition comes to be activated in a particular case. On one view which seems, for the most part at least, to be the view powerfully commended in familiar writings by Professor Gilbert Ryle, there is nothing we can properly note in between the account of the observable physical course of our behaviour and the dispositions which regulate this. The alleged on-going course of mental processes, as the dualist understands them, is dissolved into the attitudes or dispositions which govern the observable conduct and explain it. Doing things on purpose reflects a general readiness to do certain things. The exceptions seem to be momentary aches or tickles and like sensations, and even of these there are desperate attempts to tell the story exhaustively in terms such as 'inhibited disposition to scratch' etc. But even if we were to go along with this bold reductionist programme, we would be invoking dispositions, if they are to count at all, as factors in some way regulating or determining what in point of observable fact we do outwardly. In that respect the determinism involved would be peculiarly rigid and depressing.

There are not, however, many who go along with the complete evacuation of the space between dispositions and visible behaviour. The relation of attributes of external things to their actual state or behaviour at any time presents a special problem which need not be considered here – it would be much bound up with the way we think of substance in this context. But in the case of persons, and I would add of other sentient existence and awareness, the disposition is activated in particular mental states in the course of which our own behaviour is maintained. If I am moved to act by love of someone I must have some thoughts at the time of ways in which I may please or serve that person, or some other thoughts and desires coloured by my concern for my friend. My love is not a blind force operating independently of what the course of my experience and understanding is like. This may not on all occasions require explicit thought of the person I love, but my thoughts at the time must owe something to my regard for that person.

Likewise, if someone acts out of fear, there will be some explicit thought at that time of some particular menace or, in the absence of some object or event we particularly dread, a vague thought of some unpleasant fate we may suffer. In the absence of this we would have to invoke some unconscious attitude or motivation. It is not easy to settle how precisely these should be envisaged, if we allow them. There is no particular problem about the possibility that past events of which we have no sort of recollection have shaped our attitudes in ways of which we can give no proper account at present. It is in this way that a Freudian unconscious motivation would usually be understood; and we may also invoke some unconscious feature of our experience in respect of the way a great deal of our passing experience drops rapidly

agent in his own account',¹⁰ and she also speaks of the agent having 'a reason for acting', which is his motive 'if in treating it as a reason he conceives it as something good or bad, and his own action as doing good or harm'.¹¹ This is not easily reconcilable with her equally firm declaration that she is 'very glad not to be writing either ethics or literary criticism'.¹² But even so she seems to be giving us an incomplete story.

This is because there are two ways in which my conceiving something as good or bad may be offered as an explanation for my acting. One of these would be as a justification of what I am doing, a reason for thinking it right. In that case we have to consider it in the full context of a claim of duty which may be opposed to my own wishes, and, in that event, we do not have an explanation of my response in the normal way – the agent makes his choice. But outside this sphere, my deeming something good or significant affects my practice only by affecting my inclinations which, in the absence of counteracting factors, in the case of a moral choice, determine my conduct. Both the way I come to deem something good and the way this in turn enters into my own wishes (and it does not inevitably do so unless goodness is itself conceived in terms of one's wishes) are themselves shaped by various factors, heredity and my physical and social environment in particular. My evaluations at a particular moment cannot be altered by me at will, any more than my inclinations. We cannot in any final way vary what comes about here.

This is why it seems to me inconclusive, and often misleading, to say, as Professor Anscombe does, that 'Motives may explain action to us; but that is not to say that they 'determine', in the sense of causing, actions'.^{12a} We need not quarrel seriously about words. There may be a case for a more restricted use of 'cause'. But, however that may be, the idea of a motive as a reason for action, in explaining or, as Professor Anscombe also has it, 'interpreting' an action, can only mean that having the reason brings it about that we do what we do. What she offers us, in line with many others, including Hegelian idealists and those who say similar things in another idiom today, is simply a superior form of determination. *But it is determination all the same.*

The idea of intention in the sense of what the agent anticipates and seeks to bring about in the course of his conduct, including what expressly appeals to him and both the means to this and what the agent is prepared to tolerate, in distinction from what is in fact brought about in this way, is of great importance in ethics. It is on the former alone, in the way noted already, that moral estimation turns. That is all that we strictly control, it is all that we strictly do. The rest comes about in consequence of this and we intend as we do in the expectation, usually (but not always) high and confident, that what we seek to bring about will be accomplished. The most that we strictly do, one's action in the proper sense, is the intending. It is for this that we are morally accountable and that also when we freely intend irrespective of our character at the time.

Many writers, however, especially of late, are reluctant to draw a sharp distinction, as I have done, between what we intend and what in point of fact we accomplish. The action, they hold, is or includes the outward behaviour as intended. There is no wedge we can drive between the two. There is just one whole which, in Brian

we want; and it is not eliminated, as the core of conduct, in the circumstances where it is inevitable that it supervenes as it does. It is still detectable as the crucial feature of action, and it is hard to see how we could think of action except as it supervenes upon a desire that affects it, even when it does so inevitably upon the having of our desires as such. That is what makes it active.

Willing or intending in this way is not episodic, some irruption that requires the suspension of other activity and which may be noted and considered apart; it is our on-going activity all the time in all that we do. That is why some find it hard to detect: they have wrong expectations. But there is surely something in our conduct over and above our desires and beliefs, the attitudinal conditions which Davidson properly specifies.

Davidson would no doubt agree. But what he seems prepared to recognise beyond the attitudinal conditions is just the outward performance. The intention is the performance subject to the conditions which make it intentional. 'Thus', he observes, 'if a man tries to hit a home run and succeeds, his try is his success, and cannot be its cause'. But, in that case, some curious problems arise. An example from Daniel Bennett is cited. A killer tries to shoot someone, he misses but the sound causes a herd of wild pigs to stampede and trample the victim to death. I do not know what issue of substance turns on this case. Morally, all that matters is what the killer anticipated and sought to bring about. It is doubtful whether anything else would matter even in law. The killer may be content with the outcome, but morally everything turns on what he set out to do – to kill in a special way. Whether, as things went, it could be said that he killed his victim is only important, if at all, as an account of a causal sequence that goes beyond the action proper.

Davidson outlines the proper solution to his problem – 'Do we want to say that the man killed his victim intentionally?' – in terms of the causal chain following 'the right sort of route'. But what is the right route – and the corresponding 'wayward' one – apart from conformity with what the agent had in mind and set out to accomplish? Likewise in the example of a man wanting to be rid of the danger of holding another on a rope and being so unnerved by this as to cause him to loose his hold, we would not say that he chose to loosen his hold and did it intentionally. Davidson finds a serious problem here and hints at a solution in terms of a completer statement of the causal conditions of intentional action. But is there not a more straightforward solution in terms of what a person sets himself to do in complete distinction from what in fact he brings about?

Similarly, in the case of 'intending' ahead, deciding on Monday to sew a button on Tuesday. The fact is that we cannot strictly do this. I can do many things on Monday pertaining to sewing on the button on Tuesday, including the directing of my thoughts about it. But that is all. I can only set myself to sew the button at the time, although for rough and ready purposes we can talk of intending ahead in this way. Strictly we can only set ourselves to bring things about at the time when it seems to us appropriate, in the ongoing process of maintaining our purposes as occasion seems to require, to set ourselves actually to do so – preparation ahead is another matter.

This is the answer also to a further problem which much engages Professor

an obligation to do what in no final way appeals to us, there is a very strict requirement that we should, in a wholly unqualified way, be able to do something other than we do in fact. It is just here that we have the core of the free-will problem, and it is in respect to questions of moral obligation, of properly moral evaluation, that it has been felt that the agent must be the author of his actions, not in a limited way through special conditions, but totally and without any conditions other than the agent making the choice. It is over this requirement that so many have been uneasy down the ages about any form of determinism. But this hardly enters into the recent discussions of which the work of Professor Davidson is typical.

In such a context one cannot but repeat the sad but abidingly pertinent complaint of the late Professor W. G. MacLagan, in his eminently sensible and acute contribution to the symposium on 'Freedom of the Will' at the meeting of the Mind Association and the Aristotelian Society at Edinburgh in 1951²⁸. He said 'It astonishes me that there should be discussions of this subject in which reference to the moral "ought" is conspicuous by its absence, and yet there are distinguished examples of this'.²⁹ This is at least as relevant today as when it was written.

We owe to MacLagan also very helpful illumination of the sense in which it can be said that we only try to do what we do. Normally this would be misleading, for what we normally do is decide and maintain our decision; but we may speak of trying in such contexts if there is positive action and also an element of strain. None of this, however, affects the fact that, in actual accomplishment of one's purpose, the most we can ever do is try or will. This has been challenged in recent discussion by reference to the occasions in which we would say that someone was trying.

When there is no obvious obstacle to what we are doing we would not normally say that someone was trying.³⁰ I walk to my garage, enter the car and turn on the switch to start it and drive back to the door. No one would say in such cases that I had been trying to fetch the car or to start it. We would speak of trying if we thought there was some fault with the car, or with my skill in managing it, which would make it uncertain that I would succeed. It would be some reflection on myself or the car to say that I was trying to start it. Likewise, if I lifted a small stone by the sea to throw in the water, no one would normally say that I was trying to lift it. I was obviously doing so. But if I was struggling with a large boulder which it was not clear that I could lift, and yet not obviously out of the question, one would say that I was trying.

This is plain sailing so far as ordinary usage is concerned. It is misleading to use the word 'try' in the contexts where it is not appropriate. But this has no relevance to the claim that all that we do on all occasions is try to accomplish our aims, in the sense that all we can strictly do is will, though normally with the confidence that what we seek to bring about can be brought about in this way. Our ordinary use of 'trying' is not made in the context where we are seeking to set out what is involved in our conduct in an over-all way. Some willing, not episodic but sustained, is involved in doing all we do all the time, unless we are to defy the plain facts of experience and reduce our conduct to outward performance or such performance directed by dispositions which are not embodied in the ongoing mental processes we have all the

CHAPTER VII

Guilt and Alienation

A person is guilty, in the moral sense, if, in the exercise of the freedom already described, he complies with his own wishes at the time rather than what seems to him then the course of his duty. This is, in itself or initially, an ethical or moral matter. It has further important repercussions, but guilt in itself is an essentially ethical concept, although it has a legal counterpart with which we are not here concerned. Morally, it stands for some moral disvalue of our conduct or moral evil. There are degrees of guilt depending upon the deviation from one another of our own desires and our understanding of our duty at a particular time, and thus on the strength of temptation and the effort required to overcome it. The greater the effort required – a free effort of will – the finer the achievement, and also the more is there extenuation in the event of failure and credit for effort even when it does not prove finally adequate. Our failure is a fact about our conduct, determining some objective moral disvalue to which the terms 'moral guilt' or 'moral evil' usually refer.

No one who makes a moral choice can fail to be aware of the sort of choice he is making, the freedom involved requires and guarantees that, such a choice being what we most peculiarly do ourselves. This does not mean that an agent is always fully aware of the implications of what he is doing – far from it. Our actions often turn out to have consequences which we do not anticipate and which, in many instances, there was not the remotest likelihood that we could have anticipated. But that is not relevant here. What matters now is that an agent, in a properly moral situation, can not make an effort of will to comply with what seems to him morally required or fail to make it and yield to the promptings of prevailing inclinations without being aware of the duty confronting him, as he then understands it, and the strain imposed by the contrary pull of what he otherwise prefers. Without this the choice involved would be meaningless. This in turn, it must be added, does not mean that he is always clear-sighted about his desires and their complexities or further changes they may swiftly undergo, but he will be aware of the main pull at the time, usually very clearly, and he cannot fail to comply with what presents itself as an obligation without being aware of its so presenting itself. Such awareness may not always be a very reflective one, but the nature and gravity of the situation in itself must be evident for there to be such a choice at all.

It does not follow that a proper impression of such situations is always retained once the occasion is over, least of all when it happens, as (I have suggested¹) is

some instances of the vicious practice itself. But this is mainly because the hypocrite is only restrained by prudential reasons and, in addition, sets out to give an impression of sanctity which would be quite exploded if his thoughts were known – there is vile deceit as well as wicked thoughts. But there are other cases where, in spite of having lively thoughts of doing what is wrong, it would be much to a person's credit to have pulled back from the brink when it came to putting it in practice. Even if someone sets out to harm his rival or enemy, there is much extenuation if he does not do it when it comes to the point. But the initial set of his purpose remains bad. What is harder to settle is the gravity of idly thinking of pursuing an improper course with no intention of putting it into practice.

Can it ever be innocent to entertain in thought or fantasy some thought or practice which we would think it wrong to put into actual practice? It might seem so, but I suspect that any cases which begin to be plausible here are so because we abstract from a total situation, as it would be in actual fact, some pleasurable ingredients in disregard of the total circumstances which make a course wrong. Once we realize the closeness of the involvement it becomes evident also how near we are getting to actually willing an improper course. The set of our thoughts and of a lively imagination has much to do with our inclinations, and thus with possible practice, a matter which our moral mentors are wise to bring steadily before our minds. There are also thoughts which are bad in themselves as well as in their conduciveness to practice. I may thus dwell on the torment I would like to inflict on my enemy, and savour the thought, without any likelihood of my doing anything to bring that about. There is thus much moral significance to the set of our thoughts within the play of our thoughts which does not lead overtly to action. But this itself is within our own control.

It may not be possible entirely to change the direction of our thoughts. The situations in which we find ourselves determine much of our thinking. If I am menaced by a robber I cannot easily turn my thoughts away from the gun he points at me. Given my interests, and my situation at the moment, I shall continue to think along the line of what I am writing now. It is sometimes hard to tear our minds away from some absorbing subject. But we can almost always do this, as we can also change the situation – by going out to play or joining others at the table. In reverie and imaginative play of thought we can usually swing our thoughts away in another direction at will. This does not extend to what, in some particular respect which is not play or reverie, we do think, any more than it covers our beliefs and wishes. We cannot change the latter at will, as was stressed earlier, although we can change them in time, and sometimes rapidly, by the set of our thoughts and our actions – we can cultivate beliefs. But this itself turns on the direction we give to our thinking, and that is what expressly concerns us now.

For these reasons there may be much in our lives beyond what we actually perpetrate, or even set ourselves to bring about, for which we are properly accountable in the moral sense. In the inner recesses of our own thoughts there may be much in which we may indulge beyond what is proper, and what we ourselves appreciate is proper, for us to allow ourselves. The private theatre of our personal

This proclivity is given a prominent place, by Flugel and other Freudian psychologists, in their account of social as well as individual attitudes. It is sometimes called 'The Polycrates Complex'. An exceptional run of success caused Polycrates and his friends to be much alarmed at the way the balance of anticipated ill-luck was increasing for him, and he therefore sought to make adjustment by throwing a very valuable ring into the sea. As it chanced the ring was swallowed by a fish which was caught and found its way to the monarch's table. On this seeming failure of the attempt at appeasement, there was great consternation, guests speedily departing to avoid being caught in the impending calamity which all thought was imminent. We can all recognise something of this sort of unreason, and psychologists like Flugel present an impressive case for its prominence in the formation of our attitudes and practices. It can operate at subdued states of mind and repressions which conceal or obscure its impact. Whether it is as pervasive as some suppose is another matter, and it is a moot point how much our normal attitudes of mind are affected by it. The matter is largely one for the psychologists and the evidence they can provide. But it must be made plain that permutations of the sort noted in the formation of our attitudes of mind and character, however appropriately they may be described as a sense of guilt, do not, in the absence of control which we may exercise or wilfully abjure, amount to properly moral guilt. The latter turns, not on what we feel or complexities of our natures which turn upon some expected condemnation, no matter how brought about, but upon what we wittingly allow ourselves, in matters of thought and feeling as in what we seek to bring about overtly. Our indebtedness, in moral and religious understanding, to recent psychology is immense, and I hope to give some intimation of that again. But, as most psychologists would insist themselves, we cannot leave the field entirely to them. Our ethical problems have a distinctiveness we must not erode.

This is the place where we may also fittingly note a further way in which we may speak of a sense of guilt, namely as involved in our feelings or emotional attitudes. It is certainly very common to speak of a feeling of guilt. The word 'feeling' is an ambiguous one. It sometimes stands for belief and degrees of apprehension. We often say 'I feel sure...' One may feel uncertain about the outcome of a venture, or feel, 'in our bones', that it is likely to rain. These are mainly cognitive attitudes, though not unrelated to emotional factors. But 'feeling' may stand more explicitly for some emotion. When so used, the 'feeling of guilt' may refer not directly to the moral wrong-doing itself but to some emotion which accompanies it or is engendered by it. Such emotions will vary, from fear of retaliation or punishment from some recognised source to genuine remorse as an attitude of mind and emotion peculiarly appropriate to our state in actual wrong-doing. There certainly are emotions appropriate to various situations, and we can be sensitive in various degrees to what they are. We cannot, as was noted, command these at will, but they can be induced and cultivated. It is also our duty, as far as we can, to ensure that our emotional reactions are appropriate in these ways.

There can be emotional reactions also to pseudo-guilt. Granted that we are convinced that we are, in some respect, morally at fault, it is fitting that we should be

It may be a platitude, but no less important for that, that no life can sustain itself without a world other than itself. This has a peculiar significance where the more creative reaches of the mind are concerned. In art there has to be disclosure, the captivating disclosure that takes us out of ourselves. The world and situations of persons within it become thereby more starkly real and important in themselves. The structure of the world, in our study of it, becomes more meaningful and arresting. Persons count for their own sake, not just in a counterfeit world of their involvement with ourselves. Realism, in this sense, is the stuff of all that matters in human existence. To be deprived of the sustenance that comes from deep recognition of a reality that is over against us, and of its claims, leads to intellectual anaemia and spiritual debility. It is one way in which persons and people perish, as will be made plainer from general literature shortly. But to uphold, in actual conduct and untrammelled choice, the claims that do not emanate from our own wishes but actually oppose them, is one fundamental, and I should say indispensable, way in which we may retain our hold on the world as sustainingly over against us, and not a thin and flimsy veil of adaptable fantasy or a place of comforting delusions into which to escape.

This is exceptionally true in religion. For here more than anywhere we have to do with 'the other', not just, in this case, in terms of ontology and our distinctness, but in the sense of a reality that is altogether beyond all finite conditioned existence. We cannot, I submit, think of God in any way other than as transcendent. We do not postulate him in the normal way – this to account for that. He is the ground of all other existence, compounding for the fortuitousness of all other being. Finite explanations, however coherent and impressive, are never exhaustive, and we are led in this way to the sense of a reality which is complete and the self-sustaining source of all else which, by reason of this finality, passes altogether beyond our comprehension of its essence except in the requirement of an ultimate sustaining source. This does not preclude further intimations of God, within our own experience, and I have offered elsewhere³ my own view of how this comes about. But how God exists and what it can be to be uncreated and eternal will always elude us. God is essentially mysterious. His impact upon us is the impact of what is altogether other than ourselves.

This is one major way in which it is peculiarly hard to achieve and maintain our hold upon the reality of God. He does come, in subtle but disturbing and challenging ways, into the heart of our own existence. But we never find him in the normal ways of our thought, though we are not without distinct assurance of his presence. Most religions concur in this and, I should maintain, true religion everywhere. God is the wholly other which is also present, a theme which is itself hard to handle judiciously, there being an abiding temptation to sacrifice one term in this utterance to the other. Some religious thinkers, in very recent times as in the past, have taken the transcendence and otherness of God to dispense with the need of consistency and discipline of thought in understanding his ways, quite the contrary to the especial requirement of careful thinking in religion. The transcendence of God is pervasive and regulative in all apprehension of him, but that is the reverse of a licence to think

directs our thoughts and concerns more to ourselves and our advantage. Guilt is a prime depressant of other-regarding attitudes. A spurious sense of guilt can be exposed and cured, and our best recourse is to seek to do that. But, in the case of genuine guilt, the agent knows that, in clear deliberation, he has put himself and his own concerns at the centre in preference to the proper requirements of the situation. I can think of nothing more likely than that to deepen any propensity we have to view the world as a setting for ourselves, and for the roles we assign ourselves, rather than for the way it is and its requirement of us. If, at the supreme point of our own initiative, we betray our involvement in a world genuinely other than ourselves, the way for that world to nourish us, to be richly meaningful in our experience, gives way to debilitating fictions of what we ourselves and the world are like. We shall fashion the world to our fancy and wither in our snug seclusion.

This is not unvarying, much less a once for all event. It varies in range and depth with the fluctuation in moral conduct, itself affected, in the setting of it, by variations in belief and character. Further factors come into the situation as a whole. There are non-moral as well as moral values, and the former, in their play within themselves and with moral worth, set the over-all stance and state of persons. They may elevate or, if negative or bad, depress, though not by invariable rule – a bad experience may be part of a more complete triumphal experience, as when pain is nobly borne. But this does not eliminate the centrality of the activity in which we ourselves have the most complete control and where it is in no sense something that merely happens to us. To fail here is to fail where general confidence is most undermined and we seek remedies by retreating further into a world of our own.

Some moral decisions are more momentous than others. But they need to be viewed in the context of a total experience, in the course of which the gap between duty and interest broadens and again narrows and closes. There are also further counteracting factors which restore the balance of a person's stance and attitude. But we must not underestimate the way a grave decision to go along with our own preferences at the expense of obligation makes it harder to resist the like temptation in future, and in that way makes it more likely that we shall turn away from the world as it is, and its proper requirements, to a world of our own.

This has an important social side as well, notwithstanding that moral choice itself is a uniquely individual matter. The ethos of a society is affected by the conduct and the states of mind of its members. Preoccupations become part of an establishment or fashion, and individuals who do not go along with these find it hard to detach themselves wholly from them and their consequences. There is a climate of society, in a familiar metaphor, and few can remain unaffected by it. Withdrawal and fantasy has its place here also, giving to prevailing attitudes, most of all in creative matters most distinctive of us as human beings, conditions and proclivities which do not spring directly from individual stance and initiative. This is one of the ways in which it may be proper to say that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. Health of mind, in our creativity and for ordinary as well as more endowed persons, and the right discernment in higher and spiritual matters, may not be easy to maintain in a social or cultural setting which does not favour them. There are arid and sterile

grieved or angry, bearing in mind the limits of all such ascription in the case of God. But this is taken beyond proper understanding if it is presented as a desire to hurt the sinner as such irrespective of any further good to which that may lead. It is understandable that there should be grave misrepresentations in such matters. In practice indignation would often go along with punishment, and the deeper the outrage the greater would be the expectation of a dire manifestation of it visited upon the sinner. The idea of retribution has certainly had a prominent place in earlier and later thought and practice. It would enter into the way people thought of God when they said, with the psalmist, that 'God is angry with the wicked every day'.¹⁰ But this does not mean that in further refinement of thinking we may not dissociate ourselves from the idea of the hurt which God is expected to inflict on the sinner while retaining, as very profound insight, the sense of the peculiar offensiveness of wrong-doing to God to which the Bible and other scriptures bring such moving testimony. The grievousness of wrong-doing, in the context of our relation to God, is very properly stressed and may be given proper recognition by us in contexts where vivid imprecations, in bearing testimony to God's detestation of wickedness, lend credence also to unacceptable notions with which they are intertwined but which cautious and more enlightened thinking discards.

If we were to think of God's indignation in terms of retribution we would still have to think very carefully of the mode and measure in which this could be admitted. Christian theology has not always done that. The idea of retribution has in fact played a very extensive part in the development of Christian thinking, and it is sometimes presented today in very simplistic terms which cannot fail to alienate people who might otherwise be attracted to the Christian religion and its God of love. The punishment envisaged, even if punishment were inherently called for, is often out of all proportion to the offence, most obviously so when torment is expected to continue without end hereafter. No wickedness can be so vile as to call for anything so repugnant to good sense and justice. For what sort of appalling vice or cruelty could we conceivably approve of its being inflicted?

It does not in the least follow that those who believe in God, and are aware of his presence, can think lightly of the way their transgressions are offensive to God. But, while juristic metaphors and talk of the wrath and anger of God have their place here, I suggest that we get closer to the truth of the matter when we take our cue from our own personal relations and how they are marred and again restored. To think in these ways is not to dispense with the past. We depend much in our present understanding of faith on the earlier deposit of it and on nuances and insights, coming from very deep and genuine experience clothed in moving and imaginative language. We should not be afraid of the power of such expressions. Insightful culture owes much to the past even when there is much that seems outmoded. But we have to heed carefully also how best a precious heritage is preserved. It may serve us best in a transmutation in a new setting where the message it really has for us is in no way dimmed. It is thus that we best understand today the anger of God. It is thus, as for Jonathan Edwards, a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. How should we see this now?

It is best understood in terms of the alienation brought about by wrong-doing, and

practitioners of religion seem to understand it. It must be all or nothing, and nothing matters like it. God is inexhaustible goodness and holiness. If we have a personal relation with him, what can matter more? What can deepen more the meaning of all else that we value?

This does not mean that religious persons must be self-consciously so all the time. The ebb and flow of religious awareness is itself a familiar theme. Even the most devout have periods when their minds are not taken up wholly with their faith. There are variations of attention even within contemplative exercise itself, and religion, even for the most contemplative, involves much besides prayer and meditation. There must be 'works' and practice as well. Nor is all this a matter of explicit religious service. There is the normal course of life to be run, for priest and laymen alike, there are countless pursuits of worth in themselves to be followed and much to be enjoyed. But there must also for religious persons be the permeation of all undertakings by the profound and challenging awareness of the never-ending love and care of God for all. Deeply embedded in normal ways, even trivial ones, and for much of our time not explicit at all, it nonetheless affects our attitudes generally, leavening the whole of life as the most momentous item of experience we could ever have. The preciousness of it, in moments of deepest awareness, is quite beyond words.

Yet this is what is so rudely ruptured by moral evil. This is not by the will or some fiat of God, although that is how prophetic imagination, not wholly disentangling itself from limited, superstitious views, has often presented it. God has 'turned his face away', he has 'forgotten' us. But a deeper vein of prophecy repudiates this, 'if I make my bed in hell behold thou art there',¹¹ or as Isaiah tenderly put it, 'Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee'.¹² 'Lo, I am with you always' is the New Testament assurance. But none of this precludes the dimming of our sense of the presence of God, or the understanding that God may be pained.

It is in fact a common experience to find that our sins have come between us and God. We have set ourselves against what he especially endorses. Estrangements in our own relations with one another are not easy to mend, confidence and trust are weakened and the main offender does not find it easy to maintain a concerned relationship which he has just repudiated. The tendency is to let things slide, while retaining perhaps the old formal affinities; attention is averted from deeper trust and concern, and gradually one or the other drifts out of the area where they count and have deep significance in and for themselves. The world of genuine interest and concern closes in on itself. Where the fault is one's own it is much harder to resist that contraction, though no doubt there are factors in the total situation which work the other way. One's concern for others is seriously weakened when we badly wrong them and this is a grievous obstacle to our drawing genuine personal sustenance and enrichment of experience from our contacts with them. The world from which we derive our spiritual sustenance is impoverished.

Wrong-doing is not the only source of such estrangement. But it is the most direct and explicit, arising from the stance which we ourselves in full consciousness adopt. The general circumstances of our existence, including a social environment in which

References

- 1 above p.56-7.
- 2 *Man, Morals and Society*: p.54.
- 3 *In Our Experience of God*.
- 4 Allen and Unwin, 1938.
- 5 op.cit., p.214.
- 6 op.cit., p.223.
- 7 op.cit., p.225.
- 8 op.cit., p.229.
- 9 Habakkuk 1, 13.
- 10 Psalm. 7, 11.
- 11 Psalm 139, 8.
- 12 Isaiah 49, 15.

CHAPTER VIII

Solitude in Literature and Philosophy¹

'I understood that the world was nothing, a mechanical chaos of casual, brute enmity on which we stupidly impose our hopes and fears. I understood that, finally and absolutely, I alone exist. All the rest, I saw, is merely what pushes me, or what I push against, blindly – as blindly as all that is not myself pushes back. I create the whole universe, blink by blink – An ugly god pitifully dying in a tree.'

These words are from a novel which will be, I imagine, familiar to many. It is by John Gardner and was first published in 1971. Some greeted it with wild enthusiasm, as a modern masterpiece of imaginative writing, others were repelled by the stark horror which the occasional pity does little to relieve as the terrible story unfolds itself. The title of the novel is *Grendel* and it offers a terrifying picture of a modern Beowulf.

The torment of Grendel lies in his inability to communicate. He has grown out of the world of his beast-mother though remaining partly dependent upon her, on her mindless pity and affection as well as her help. But she provides nothing that he needs even though they both move at some kind of supernatural level. But neither can he communicate with men, he makes nothing of their talk; and while he aspires initially to be like them or with them, their total inability to make anything of him, beyond the menace of his power and preter natural presence, drives him to unmitigated hate and destructive malice. An object of pity to himself, he is otherwise the symbol of total evil. This is the theme, presented in less colourfully fantastic forms, of a great deal of recent literature. On occasion the world of fantasy becomes dominant again, and one is not certain when one is moving in a realm of fable and allegory and when in the community of real persons, as in another much admired and perplexing work of fiction, *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood. But the upshot, even when not so explicitly stated, is the same rejection of the world as we initially have it, the retreat into a world, sometimes a very hateful one, where we ourselves weave all that matters into some fashion of a projection of ourselves, not simplistically into what we wish but quite often into what we ourselves know to be most repulsively degrading. There is even a craving, but in a horrifying sophisticated human way, for animal existence without the unawareness of beasts. We cannot escape our destiny to be human, but we also fail to relate to the world as we ourselves apprehend it in the proper community of our awareness of each other. When fantasy is not invoked to bring out the full horror of this incarceration in a world that is not fitted to our

beautiful ducks that were the admiration of a man on whose pond they settled. Evil and ugliness seemed invariably to triumph.

In the main story, 'The Princess with the Golden Hair', the narrator carries on a love affair simultaneously with two very different persons. One of these, the 'Princess' in the title, is the sophisticated, elegant wife of a business acquaintance, the other is the very simple, but not naive, girl he has got to know at the Tango Casino where she works. In both cases there is deep affection and respect, patience and restraint towards the more sophisticated woman in her physical disability, tenderness and practical kindness towards the girl from the Casino caught up in the wretchedness of her background and distressful family relations and her illness. But when various circumstances bring the two affairs abruptly to an end, the lover is not really deprived of anything vital in his own existence. He declares at the close of the story:

She had given me this vision...it was something so strong and instinctive that it could outlive the hurts and infections, the defilements, among which we lived – so organic that it could not be analysed. She had transmitted a belief and a beauty that could not be justified or explained. Nor could they ever be paid for or sold – And what had I been able to give in return? What had I to compare with these? My passion for painting, perhaps. But I had not been able to give her even that.³

In all his admiration and concern for the one lovely and superior person, and his tender sharing of the wry humour and trust of the other, a sort of saintliness that shone through the sordidness of their encounters, he had remained inviolable, he had given away nothing that was truly himself; there was no totality in any of his generosity or his pity; at the deepest level he had not been hurt, for his love had not touched him there. He remained confined in the solitariness of his proper existence, radically unaffected but lost; 'I was felled by a sudden glumness as I knew, and found it bitter to know, that I was back now in Hecate County'.⁴

A similar strain runs through much of the work of Iris Murdoch, both in explicit philosophical discussion and in fiction. In *The Sovereignty of Good*⁵ we are warned against the false 'consolations of self-pity, resentment, fantasy and despair' and urged to seek help, through art and the world of nature, to pierce 'the falsifying veil' and look at the world as it really is, to 'be realistic, to perceive justly'. In some passages in her novels, Miss Murdoch presents very vividly the horror of the enclosure in one's own inner existence that comes about by failure of involvement: and this becomes the central theme of many of her writings, for example, *The Sea, the Sea*. Here we have two young persons deeply and unaffectedly in love with the prospect of a happy life together, but the girl feels the demand of this particular love so excessive that she breaks away from it altogether and in due course enters into another happy but more commonplace marriage. Many years later the two meet by sheer chance, the man by now at the peak of a fine career, and a celebrity. In fancy at least the flame of the earlier romance is kindled, nothing in all the man's amours and successes having filled the void. He seeks to re-establish their love more deliberately, but the woman

matched by Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' and Golding's *Pincher Martin*.

Mijuskovic concludes that, on the 'philosophical foundation' of the ability of thought to 'curl back on itself', 'the disciplines of literature, philosophy and psychology have erected a significant and true insight into man's fundamental nature, namely that each of us, separately, exists in isolation, in a state of desolate loneliness, enclosed within the confines of a nomadic prison which we continually strive to escape'.¹³

But it is not only from writers of fiction that we learn of inwardness and the desolation that comes from being enclosed within it. Philosophers, as we have seen already, have also been much occupied with it. They have been so in various ways. In more severely professional concerns, they have been profoundly aware, in theories of knowledge and perception, of the danger that the phantom lights of solipsism may draw them into places where no progress is possible. Solipsism is a position in which no thinker can rest. No one can go on communicating just with himself, and it is rumoured that those who have tried it have ended in literal madness. It goes against all we assume, in all our undertakings, namely, that we are in genuine communion with other beings; and a philosophical theory which denies this, or logically leads to such a conclusion, is usually thought to have refuted itself completely.

All the same, we have sometimes to veer very close to that danger. The privacy of our experience is not to be denied. No one literally lives the life of anyone but himself, he can have no experience literally besides his own. This may often seem a very daunting thought, and it is often a thought that we resist; it tends to induce its own kind of claustrophobia. But there is some inevitable privacy even in the media through which we normally, on some views always, break out into genuine intercourse and a properly public world. Perception involves various forms of extendedness. We function in Space and never escape it – short at least of some paranormal power or experience. But Space itself seems also initially private.

This may seem very paradoxical. Our thoughts and other experiences, including so-called physical sensations, are not themselves extended. If we locate them, it is in some association with our bodies. But our awareness of Space is nonetheless bound up with variable individual perceptions. What comes in our fields of vision varies, not only with external factors like the quality of the light, but with the situation of our own bodies and the functioning of our sense organs and neurological systems. What is presented to each one in this way varies from moment to moment and from each case to the next. Naïve realism, in its strict form, takes it all to be real all the time, and much more that is not disclosed. Few, if any, accept this today; there would be a preposterous overlap within the same allegedly external extendedness. But short of that, our entry into a public world of extended objects is via an endless variety of initially private experiences.

There are some features of our awareness of Space which may complicate the matter much further. For there is a case to be made, and it has been impressively made by Professor H. H. Price, for ascribing some depth even to immediate perceptual awareness. If this is sound, the question of overlap becomes an acute and crucial one, and also most intriguing. For example, if the persons and furniture I

dispositions, we shall of course have little to say to the witness and perplexities of the creative writers of whose work some samples were instanced earlier. For, on that view, there is no inner world of experience other than the observable world of our normal commerce. The same goes for those who, while admitting some kind of inner existence, identify it with the brain and other bodily processes. For an inner existence as tenuous as that, and lacking any mode of shaping its destiny of itself, is allowed no real play as between involvement in the world around us and in ourselves. Issues of involvement or withdrawal just do not arise.

There could, no doubt, be some ingenious way in which a distinction might be drawn between experiences which are public and those which are private, and some sense of desolate isolation, in terms of a Rylean account of mental existence. Ingenuity can go a long way, as outright materialists have shown from time to time. Misunderstanding could have some place in a Rylean view or its like; and this could be a source of painful isolation and distress. But it would be most partial and occasional; it would have little to match up to the sense of a despairing imprisonment within oneself, as a constant liability of being as we are, which is so disturbingly vivid in the literature to which I have alluded.

To meet the requirements of the human situation we have both to recognise the finality of each being the ultimate subject of his experiences, involving the immediacy of such experiences in having them, together with rich and fulfilling commerce with a world which is not ourselves and with one another, such commerce being mediated in a way whose amazing complexity does not obtrude at all into the easy and normally dependable way our encounter with the world and other creatures comes about.

This duality is of the essence of our human situation. All that is of worth depends upon it, and all that goes wrong. Solipsism is the way of madness, in theory and practice. Experience, even if it could be sustained of itself, has no point except in the transmutation of itself to awareness of what is not itself. But experience, however unobtrusive and elusive as I have said it is, is not to be merged into the world it knows. The world is not all there is, though we have often to behave as if that were so, giving some the impression that there is nothing further to be noted. But experience is as real as its reference. We live through or 'enjoy' it but always as individual subjects of experience. To insist on the latter is no hostage to solipsism. But the way philosophical solipsism has to be confronted, in all its threat and horror, in philosophical thinking, is the intellectual aspect of the appalling semblance of it in expedients of escape and withdrawal into the recesses of our private existence.

To warn us against this peril has been the theme of some notable philosophical writing, but the concern expressed in those writings has sometimes over-reached itself, very markedly in the case of Plato. No one has insisted more steadily than Plato on the need for us to align ourselves with genuine reality, to shun the world of shadows and climb out of the cave to a world that is inescapably real and other than illusions and fantasies of our own. But Plato is thinking here of the Forms and it is not likely that these realities, for such Plato himself took them to be, attuned as they are expressly to the intellect, can provide the encounter which is effectively enriching

when darkest Africa was more apt a physical description than today. The title is doubly symbolical: the trader about whom it revolves, highly skilled and with immense charisma, has destroyed himself soul and body, in the desperate effort to so exploit his position as to gain vast power and wealth for himself. The mystique of his ways and achievement, awesome in its ruthlessness as in its scale, is conveyed obliquely, and thereby with greater effect and significance, in the narration of another man, himself also a remarkable character, who is irresistibly drawn, through terrible toils and disasters, to the search for the elusive legendary figure presented in the story by an author whose exceptional flair for drawing the natural environment into the toning and deepening of his tale has rarely been equalled.

The story must be read for itself. I can only refer to the climax with its terrible undertones of horror and corruption. Solitude becomes a more dominant theme – 'a solitude, a solitude, nobody'¹⁸, 'A great silence around and above'¹⁹, 'we penetrated deeper into the heart of darkness'²⁰ to find 'that shadow – this wandering and tormented thing'²¹ which could only cry 'in a whisper' 'that was no more than a breath' 'the horror, the horror'.²² There was still some kind of nobility, 'a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions'.²³ When it was over, the narrator could only remember 'mistily, with a shuddering wonder, like a passage through some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire'²⁴.

Note should be taken also of one important consequence of the essential initial privacy of our experience, one that affects especially the fear of withdrawal into one's own inner existence. It is a misguided way in which we are apt to try to cope with this situation, namely to seek to establish an assured contact with others as other by seeking to penetrate directly to their own inner existence. This is bound to fail, it is, for reasons noted already, inherently impossible. But there is deep in our nature, induced by dismay and misery, an urge, unformulated and not usually reflective, to seek relief and fulfilment in these essentially impossible ways, to push beyond the barrier which finitude itself imposes upon us. This is perverse but understandable. The most overt and immediately damaging forms of this perversion are found when we force one another into situations where the normal disguises and adaptations are dropped, when we see, as we seem to think, the naked soul. The pretences, the normal conformities, fall away in extremes of passionate excitation, or in anguish and terror. At last we are truly at one with the other as he really is. In one way this is true: there is some kind of bond between the tormentor and his victim; passion is often stark. But it is also wrongheaded, it provides realism without worth. The impulse which induces it defeats itself. For the inner citadel of the being of the other remains unassailed – as it must be.

How extensively these reactions affect our lives today may not be too easy to determine, and I must leave the matter mainly to the reader. I am well aware of the danger, so expertly exhibited by Lady Wootton,²⁵ of providing one exclusive explanation or solution of some social malaise. But it seems plain that, all over the world, people are lapsing into various forms of madness and destructiveness. In part this is due to the exceeding rapidity of some of our advances, the ensuing complexities

here, there is only one ultimate solution, the salve in which our distinctness and its dignity remains unimpaired. It is found in our openness to transcendent being, the inexhaustible richness of an ultimate which not only sustains us but keeps us, as it will always keep us, straining after a surpassing holiness which does not crush or overwhelm us or eliminate what we severally are, but which draws us, in ever more complete and satisfying ways, measured in the modes in which it may be received of us, to varieties of worth and attainment that do not pall.

References

- 1 This chapter draws heavily on my H. B. Acton Lecture given to The Royal Institute of Philosophy in its course on Philosophy and Literature and published in the volume under that title by the Cambridge University Press on behalf of the Institute and under the editorship of its Director, Professor Phillips Griffiths. I am grateful for permission to make use of it here.
- 2 *Sermons and Soda-Water* (London: The Crescent Press, 1961) p.265.
- 3 *Memoirs of Hecate County*, p.313.
- 4 *Memoirs of Hecate County*, p.313.
- 5 Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.
- 6 Chatto and Windus.
- 7 Chatto and Windus.
- 8 Whose life she had saved from drowning.
- 9 *Nuns and Soldiers* p.498-499.
- 10 1979, Van Gorcum Press, Assen, The Netherlands.
- 11 *The Hill of Dreams*, Introduction, viii.
- 12 *Of Time and the River*, xiv.
- 13 *Of Time and the River*, p.25.
- 14 For a further discussion see my 'Public and Private Space' *Proc. Arist. Soc.* 1952-53 and reproduced in the addendum to my *The Elusive Mind*.
- 15 *The Concept of Mind*, p.14.
- 16 op.cit., p.15.
- 17 *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell* Vol II (Allen and Unwin, 1969, p. 23.) The quotation does not mean that Russell had no regard for Lawrence. He despised Lawrence's ideas, and found him impossible personally, but he was fully aware of Lawrence's gifts - 'His descriptive powers were remarkable' op.cit., p. 23.
- 18 op.cit., p.70
- 19 op.cit., p.71.
- 20 op.cit., p.95.
- 21 op.cit., p.143.
- 22 op.cit., p.149.
- 23 op.cit., p.151.
- 24 op.cit., p.152.
- 25 In her *Social Science and Social Pathology*, and elsewhere.
- 26 *Jesus in the Faith of Christians* 23-27.
- 27 *The Sovereignty of Good* p.88.
- 28 op.cit., p.91.
- 29 Ibid, p.84.

CHAPTER IX

The Great Divide

The distinctness of persons, as set out earlier and presupposed in much that I have said, involves also the essential initial privacy of all experience. No one, as I have stressed, can have the experience of another except in the further sense of coming in some way to know about it and being affected by it. We can, I have maintained, form no proper conception of what it would be like to have the experience of another in the way we have it ourselves. This is not a formal or grammatical matter. It is an ultimate feature of what we are, our lot; and this is not incidental, a condition in which in fact we find ourselves but which we might in some way surpass. There just does not seem to be any way in which it could be otherwise. We may undergo enormous changes, as indeed we have done in the extension of our understanding, but there seems to be no way in which any experience could be other than the experience which is had by some individual subject or agent at the time. This is what we find experience to be, for us and for all creatures.

If this is disputed, we have no recourse, I have also insisted, after removal of misunderstanding which I have at various times been at pains to attempt, other than to invite one another to reflect again. Our distinctness and privacy is ultimate, and the vast and impressive ingenuity displayed in seeking to avoid this conclusion simply exhibits more irresistibly than ever how impossible that undertaking is, seeking to set aside what seems most evident from the start about what it is to have any experience at all.

I have spoken of limitation here, but that is only in a special sense. There is nothing to deplore in it, but on the contrary everything to welcome, for it is in virtue of this essential distinctness and privacy that almost everything that matters to us comes about, including our love for one another, our achievements and moral triumph. It presents us also with some of our most difficult tasks and problems, and, as has just been noted, with some of our most distressing situations. This, as I have said, is our lot and our inescapable lot as essentially finite creatures. However much other beings, if there are any, surpass those who inhabit this earth, they are bound in the same way to what we can conceive experience to be and what it is to be finite beings. The initial privacy I have stressed is in fact an ultimate finite limitation.

This last point needs further explication in one respect. I have said that it is just inconceivable for us to have or 'enjoy' an experience which is not, as an actual live experience, private in itself to the one who has it. But we say very different things

All the same we have to believe that he is there in fact all the time, he is never absent. For he is himself the absolute sustainer of all, not merely through the contrivances by which one thing sustains the other, but in immediately sustaining those contrivances themselves and everything there is. Creation by its very nature simply cannot be remote. For this reason we have to say that our thoughts and all our experiences are open to God precisely as they are to us. He knows them from within as each one of us does in his own case. But this is just what we have said is impossible. By its very nature experience is essentially private in the first instance. So it is, and I have no intention of modifying at all what I have persistently said on this score. Experience is bound to be private in itself, however readily known to others in further ways; it is bound to be so *for finite creatures*, but not for God. This is no prevarication. The way we must think about God is radically different from the way we must think about everything else. What holds of necessity about ourselves need not be the case for God.

This is because God is essentially transcendent. We are led to think of him, not as some ordinary fact or postulate, but as some Ground or Sustainer of everything else there is and therefore essentially beyond the way all other things are. That is why, however irresistible he is for our thought, God is essentially incomprehensible to us or 'passes our understanding'. We simply have no notion what it is like to be sustaining ourselves in being, beyond the sense which is trivial for the present of attending to whatever we find is necessary to keep ourselves alive. There is no inherent necessity in finite existences, only the necessities we find in fact in the way things are and work. We do not know what it is to be uncreated, to find existence essentially in ourselves or to confer it on ourselves. Neither have we any notion what it is to create, in the strict metaphysical or religious sense. The nearest we seem to come to that is in art and fine understanding, and in moral choice. There are obvious ways in which we may speak in these instances of creativity. But it is partial and dependent. Inspiration 'comes', the light 'dawns', we 'find' or 'see', we are 'endowed' with various gifts and ways to cultivate them, all of which is subject also to the normal facts of existence and our maintenance. We can guarantee nothing except as we are conserved. Even in the one activity which, as I have stressed, is most pre-eminently our own, namely moral choice, we function in prescribed situations and conditions of our being. Nothing is for us *ex nihilo*.

For the same reason we have no notion what it is to be not in time or eternal, to have all perfection and knowledge which is not piecemeal and acquired. The divine nature is in itself an absolute mystery. That does not make it in all ways inaccessible. We have, in the first place, to acknowledge it for what it is, and that, far from being trivial, as some suppose, is altogether momentous. But we have also clues, from within the course of our lives and general experience, as to the way, without any compromise of the ultimate mystery, in which we may find this transcendent involved and significant in the particularities of our limited existence. God is near, not just in his essential omnipresence, but in disclosures, in givings and dealing, in response and interventions which acquire a peculiarly intimate relationship. How this comes about and the warrant for it will not be considered further here. I have

systematic relating of things. There cannot be such relations or a plurality, but only one whole of being without any differentiation or change.

I put this tersely because it is a very familiar story in the history of thought. Equally familiar is the corrective supplied by Plato who pointed out that negation is never a matter of thinking what totally is not, but of thinking something other than something else, and so we come back again to the notion of rational wholes which Plato identified with the forms as genuine realities. But he was shrewd enough to appreciate also that rational explanation of this kind could never be exhaustive and pointed to an ultimate reality, the Good, beyond being and knowledge, which could only be glimpsed. The forms in turn lent some of their own reality to the otherwise illusory world of particulars, though Plato remained somewhat uncertain what this might be.

These themes, and variations upon them, set the pattern for much subsequent thought in the West. Some adhered, as do certain notable writers of today, to the Parmenidean idea of one reality into which all particulars and varieties are dissolved. Desperate attempts were made to come to some terms with the seeming facts of 'the many', sometimes by way of 'emanations' whose flight 'returns to the Alone' as in Plotinus and his mystical followers, or by the bold downright affirmation of 'the many' in defiance of their equally firm rejection, contradiction, if not elevated into a virtue, being thought inevitable here. On the learned and very clear-sighted presentation of this view recently by W. T. Stace² I have commented at length elsewhere.

Others, like Spinoza, sought to find a proper place for endless variety in the notions of modes and infinite attributes of the One Substance, while yet others returned, with the help of Hegel especially, to the notion of one exhaustively rational whole whose complexities we could not make out sufficiently at present to reach complete coherence in our understanding. F. H. Bradley modified this drastically in the insistence, among other considerations, that there had to be genuine terms in a relation and that the inevitable incompleteness of all our explanations pointed to an Absolute or ultimate Supra-rational reality of which all there is is an appearance, some things being more complete realizations of the Absolute.

By contrast the main line of Christian thinking, while acknowledging, like Plato, a supreme Good or ultimate Perfect Reality as the source of all other being, insisted upon the distinctness of all dependent or created existence, and especially the very final distinctness of persons, from God and from one another – a view usually extended to all sentient creatures, although there were exceptions like the strangely mechanistic accounts of animal behaviour by early rationalists of the modern period such as Descartes. This took many forms, but the unquestioned dependent character of finite reality was affirmed in complete compatibility with the fully distinct reality of all created things. There was little thought of absorption into divine existence, the idea of creation being peculiarly appropriate for the expression and deepening of the sense of dependence along with strictly distinct reality. Indeed, many matters given prominence and a distinctive form in Christian affirmation, such as our own sinfulness, made the idea of such absorption exceptionally difficult, though some

surprisingly close to the ones we are most familiar with today, and of which we are much inclined to think that we are the inventors. There is much consideration of memory and of the unity of experience and, in a way of particular interest to me, to one's seemingly immediate awareness of oneself as the subject of experience in such familiar matters as pleasure and pain. Professor Margaret Chatterjee has again reminded us very recently of 'the assimilative capacities of Hinduism as a cultural complex' which 'have been noted by almost all researchers into this intricate phenomenon'.⁶ In the devotional side of religion, as in the *Bhakti* movement, we come very close to the Western theistic belief in a personal God, and the familiar worship of a variety of gods find its place even in Jainism.

The idea of re-incarnation, so pervasive in most forms of Hinduism and Buddhism, involves at least some initial plurality. There is also the extensive stress on the importance and worth of present experience in much recent Hindu writing, like the massive work of Sri Aurobindo, protesting with great vehemence against the notion that the world around us is a mere dream world, a cosmic illusion, and our own sense of separateness due wholly to ignorance. The effect of world-renouncing teaching of this kind is thought to be truly sinister.⁷ By contrast we read much of the indwelling of the Life Divine in all life and in nature. It is also well-known how central a place is given in Confucian teaching to the notion of a Power Beyond which works for justice in our present existence.

These varieties of emphasis need no further stressing here. They are a theme in themselves. But they also leave us uncertain, in the final analysis, just what stances they severally involve. After all it was the concern of many prominent idealist writers around the turn of the century, such as A. E. Taylor and Pringle-Pattison, to do justice to the distinctness and freedom of individual persons, within the framework, in one form or another of absolute idealism. The self, so conceived, had its important place as a 'centre of unification', but, as experience became more complete and coherent, these centres merged in one another and the Absolute – the peep-holes, in the famous metaphor, enlarging to the elimination of the wall. However essential for our moral accountability it may be that our conduct be our own, as is stressed especially in the notable first chapter of Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, the distinctness of persons was dissolved, in the final account, into the Whole of which it was some limitation or appearance. Likewise, when Samkara insisted, in much anticipation of modern thought, that memory requires a self which transcends passing states, a subject distinct from the thing it knows, we also find that this individual self is in turn an appearance of one universal self. So just where do we finally stand?

This is not the place to try to resolve these ambiguities and varieties of emphasis. That is an enormous task to be left to the appropriate experts. There is a great range of emphasis and concern, ranging from familiar facts of common experience – or what seem to be such – to the notion of one pure consciousness in which the distinction of subject and object disappears⁸ entirely. But I refer to such matters now in pursuance of my own insistence, which is quite central to everything I maintain in metaphysics and religion, that there is here an ultimate divide which it is of the utmost importance for us to recognise and cope with, as far as we can, in all further

claims, and this may make placing or specification difficult in practice. But that the divide itself is logically ultimate seems beyond doubt.

This is why it is so important, as a prime condition of clarity of thought and of mutual understanding, that we should try to settle for ourselves, most of all in speculative thought, on which side of the great divide we are standing. There is no evading the issue, and it cannot be much postponed if our thought is to progress to some purpose. For almost anything we hold further about our own state and our destiny will be much affected, and at almost any point, by where we find ourselves on the basic issue of our own ontological status.

This is very evident, and also of exceptional importance, where views of salvation and the central religious meaning of existence are concerned. In the next chapter, which brings this study, as presented hitherto, to its close, a brief indication will be given of the way the major differences in our understanding of our own status affect our notion of religious salvation and the way it operates.

References

- 1 For example in Chapters V, VI and VII of *Our Experience of God*, Allen and Unwin 1959, and in Chapter 1 of my *Jesus in the Faith of Christians*, Macmillan 1981.
- 2 *Mysticism and Philosophy*, Macmillan, 1961. See also Chapter XV of my *The Elusive Mind*, Allen & Unwin, 1969.
- 3 *Philosophies and Culture*, Oxford 1980.
- 4 op.cit., p.21.
- 5 op.cit., p.21.
- 6 *Gandhi's Religious Thought*, Macmillan 1984, p.129.
- 7 Cf. my own *World Religions* (Jointly with R. L. Slater), p.180.
- 8 See W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* p.194-206.

CHAPTER X

Persons and Salvation

In the views which question the final ontological status of our own existence the meaning and mode of salvation will be very different from all that arises in a context which accords us some distinct and genuine reality on our own account. The language and basic terms, and much in ritual and devotional practice, may be similar, and this is itself a major source of confusion. But the purport, in major themes and subsidiary nuances, will be very different. If present existence and all we feel normally impelled to believe about it is some kind of illusion or if our distinctness is questioned in some other way, then the main concern would seem to be to discover where the true reality and significance of our existence is to be found, either by appreciating better our identity with the one reality to which we belong, or by somehow achieving that identity more completely. Alternatively, there may be some other release, achieved by a discipline or effort of our own or as a gift or grace, by which we break out of the bondage of the world and our existence as it seems to be. There is at least some superseding of the mode of being we seem to have at present.

In some cases, in forms of Buddhism for instance, it may be peculiarly difficult to set out at all, even in outline, what the ultimate aim involves. It is a release, pre-eminently from pain and suffering though not in the normal way of ending suffering, of which nothing can be explicitly said beyond indicating the way by which it comes about. Only in the experience itself, and to describe it in that way may be inadequate, will some more positive indication be possible – enlightenment is its own light. One must sympathise in large measure with the reluctance to be more specific, for the more familiar insistence on some transcendent good or ground also leaves the nature of that ground a total or transcendent mystery. But we can say how we come to recognise that it must be and involve complete perfection, and obliquely we can get very much further. But what matters at the moment is that the release or enlightenment in question now not only eludes any characterization but seems to involve all that we now seem to be, and our world, only in some instrumental way to bring about the total eclipse or elimination of all that matters here and now.

When the familiar Buddhist talk of emptiness is qualified, as it often is, by the insistence that this emptiness is itself also fullness, we are brought closer to the notion of a supreme transcendent reality beyond our proper comprehension. But it still seems to be intended that the way we are, and our world, has no proper place of its own in any final resolution of our destiny, and indeed the word 'destiny' seems itself

This may be very true for those with whom we have little regular contact, just as it has happened also that some of the deepest friendships have been maintained in correspondence. But whichever way this goes we need to be reminding ourselves in active thought from time to time about those of whom we are fond when they are not near to us. This is not affected by the way some deep attachments have survived, strengthened even, in times of enforced severance as may happen in wars. But it is hard to see how this could be achieved without constant thought of a loved one. The same holds when friends have died. They continue to influence us, parents for example, mainly in a dispositional way. It would be unusual at least to have our parents in our minds all the time. But it is not likely that they would continue to affect us dispositionally if there were no occasions when we 'summoned up remembrance' of them 'to the sessions of sweet silent thought'. The manner of all this is extremely variable and personal. But without some heeding, as circumstances allow and require, a fine relationship may come to be of no account.

A further prime condition for the maintenance and health of a personal relationship is that we should continue to act in the spirit of it. Even if some lapse or betrayal is concealed from those whom it might grieve, the strain upon the relationship from the side of the defaulter itself could be great and might make the whole meaningless for him. There might of course be justification for some deviation. A relationship should not become rigid or so despotic as not to allow for innovation or genuine difference of taste or conviction. The limits of its tolerance will vary according to its nature and circumstances. But there will be limits, some more sharply defined than others. To violate the spirit of a relationship, especially in some matter vital to it, is at least to impose a heavy strain upon it, and may prove totally disruptive of it, even if it survives in some formal way.

These conditions are pre-eminent in the case of religion. The relationship with God is a special one, not only because of its prime importance, but also because God has no visible or bodily presence such as sustains our ordinary intercourse with one another. As some of the most devout people testify, the reality of God can very easily become dim or his presence remote. Much in the normal ways of our life goes on without him, and the worshipper may find himself in that respect little different from his agnostic friend. He cannot modify this directly or change the main conditions within which we live and operate. But for that reason he needs to busy himself all the more with the practices which most conduce to the sense of the genuineness and presence of God. Without such renewal a religious awareness may become dead or formal. Who is unaware of that? This is not the place to consider closely what practices, of prayer or meditation or of practical service in the spirit of worship, are most appropriate or effective. Here again there is much reason for variety. But, if we need 'to work at' other relationships, all the more at this one.

The suspicion is, not surprisingly, raised in this context, that the purported renewal is just a mood induced artificially, some sort of contrived wishful thinking. It is not easy to dispel that suspicion, least of all from the minds of those who remain religiously unaware. The faithful are themselves prey to it often. But there is much to which we have recourse to conquer this, including the reflections which prompt the

other regards, there is a gift and something is seen. Divine revelation is thought to be pre-eminently a giving, and how some seem to be more favoured, in this as in other ways, in a world which is the concern of all-embracing love defies exhaustive comprehension by us. Faith has managed to bear this strain and we are not concerned with this particular issue in this study.

It remains that fellowship with God, and with one another in the bond of his love, is, on a Christian view, the appropriate destiny of all, notwithstanding that it is not explicitly realized for many in the present existence. My concern now is with the damage to such relationship, even to the potentiality of it as yet not awakened, which is done above all by deliberate betrayal which turns our hearts and minds away from the world as it really is to private and subjective intimations of what counts for us and the numbing of genuine involvement. How destructive this can be of aspirations besides religious ones, how wrapped we can be, in our formal sanity, in a cocoon of madness, has been noted already. It is to the destruction so engendered, involving an insensitivity to divine matters which we induce in ourselves, that the redeeming work of God is directed. He finds his way into blunted sensitivity and unconcern. Whether some point is reached where retrieval is impossible is a hard matter for us. There is much to suggest that this may be the case, and if so a God of love can hardly retain in being what is of no worth to itself or God, and yet it is also hard to believe that the resources of God are not such as to ensure eventual triumph, now or in some hereafter however remote.

It may be asked here – Why should not a life deprived of the light of God's love and the infinite riches of his being not retain all the same much that is splendid and of inherent worth? The answer is that it does. Religion as such is not everything. It has already been noted that we perceive, and respond to, what is of worth in itself independently of special religious insight, and also as an ingredient in that religious awareness itself. But awareness of God is also inchoate in all appreciation of our finitude and creates a hunger for itself which our other achievements are well set to deepen. Life does not stand still. We reach for new horizons, our interests expand, but it is hard to see how they can do so increasingly without expanding into consciousness of God, a transcendent source of all, which give our other concerns a new character, a wholly new dimension – unless this locution has been too staled by loose usage to be meaningful. At some point, I submit, our interests curl back on themselves and pall, without the transmutation which religion makes available. Other sustenance intensifies the hunger which goes beyond it.

Let me put it this way. A friend for whom I have a great regard said some while ago: 'I would just not wish to live for ever'. We can all sympathise with that. There is nothing more daunting, indeed forbidding in one way, than the thought of living on for ever. But 'for ever' is itself not quite adequate here. This is not to beat an easy retreat into ambiguity, much less the facile reductionism which treats all talk of eternity as some reference solely to a special feature or quality of the here and now. There is a Beyond which transcends our understanding, and whose inexhaustible richness transmutes our other concerns. It does not eliminate what we are but puts us in life-enhancing contact with a reality by which our mode of being and our interest

upon here is that the relevance of the idea of salvation, and the means of achieving it, must be understood on the basis of what we find significant in personal relationships and the ways in which they are marred and mended. To go further into doctrinal and theological matters is beyond the scope of this study. But there are two further observations I wish to make.

Firstly, it is very easy to travesty or parody the central Christian affirmations, and it is, alas, such travesties that have been largely presented to those outside the Christian fold, including people of other faiths. The crudest, but also the most familiar, is in terms of retributive punishment and the vicarious bearing of it on our behalf by Jesus. For those who fail to come within the ambit of this transaction, including babes and those who have never heard of Christ, there would remain eternal torment as what is fitting for them to suffer in consequence of some contamination with sin as it affects our nature regardless of deliberate determination by ourselves. What is truly amazing is that variations on this theme have been very extensively a part of Christian thinking down the ages, and are still not unknown. There are, indeed, passages in the Bible which may be interpreted in that way, but they have either to be taken out of context or without recognition of the development in our understanding of the ways of God as this shapes itself within our limited grasp and faculties at particular times. Notwithstanding colourful metaphors, like that of the sheep and the goats and other ways in which the teaching of Jesus was articulated in idioms and ways of thought familiar to his hearers, there seems to me to be nothing further removed from the mind of Christ than the notions of vicarious punishment and eternal torment – or indeed of any pointless torment at all.

The best thing to do with the purported scheme of salvation in terms of retribution and vicarious suffering, notwithstanding the vast place it has had in traditional Christian thought and theology, is just to abandon it altogether. But the alternative is by no means a finite reductionist view, whether or not other secular disciplines are invoked. Reconciliation is a costly business, and we must not repudiate the risks that are involved in our being the creatures we are with our astonishing prospects. That there is a 'price to be paid' seems to be beyond doubt, and I do not think we have to look very far into what we are like at the secular level to have fair intimation of what would be involved in such terms in the mending of our relationship with God as with one another and the establishing of us in that state of blessedness in which there is no clouding of the vision of God, or any falling away.

To that peculiar blessedness a vital contribution will be our having lived as creatures capable of falling away, and having extensively done so. The reclamation will not be in taking us out of that status, but in a victory from within it which also in due course takes us beyond it enriched in the knowledge of the conditions in which the victory was gained, 'while we were yet sinners' – and all it cost to God.

My final point concerns our essentially social situation. I have been concerned throughout with individual salvation, and that is what I think salvation is in itself, the reclamation of persons or, in the traditional terms, the saving of souls. But it was also indicated earlier that we are bound to function in a social context. We draw upon our immediate social environment and contribute to it, and this in turn owes much to a

CHAPTER XI

Addendum¹

O'Shaughnessy on Mind and Body²

It is not so long ago that those who, in the philosophy of mind, defended an ultimate ontological distinction between mental realities and bodily ones, or dualism as the term is normally used in this context, were straightway thought to be very naïve and immature, altogether unmindful of considerable advances in recent philosophy which no one would be likely to reverse. Only very recently a young philosopher, reflecting what many have come to take for granted, opened his paper for the Aristotelian Society by disclaiming all association with Cartesian dualism – 'only a crank would wish to revive that';³ it is a brush with which no self-respecting philosopher of today, familiar with the 'dark warnings from Wittgensteinians', would wish to be tarred.

There have in fact however been many modifications of the outright rejections of dualism, especially in the form of a severely reductionist behaviourism, and concessions of considerable importance to the insights we owe to Descartes and those who preceded him. Professor Richard Swinburne has done much in this vein, insisting upon the ultimacy of personal identity as we directly apprehend it. Professor Roderick Chisholm has done much in the same way in his own work, and so have Sir John Eccles and Sir Karl Popper. I had occasion to refer recently to the insistence by Mr John Foster of Oxford that 'The subject of consciousness is, as Descartes conceived him, a simple mental continuant, a pure ego, not requiring a body for his existence, but possessing that body with which his mind thus causally combines'. 'The person himself is essentially mental and only contingently corporeal.'⁴

The ghost which it was thought had been finally laid to rest walks again. Even so, the concessions, substantial as they are, have also a lingering doubt about them. We must not go too far back to Descartes, the concessions need qualifications, and these may also be substantial; we have to walk warily if we go along again with the outmoded dualism. It may seem right in so many ways, but surely it cannot really be right any more. We must make certain that we draw back from the brink.

Thus it is that Mr Foster, for example, has to turn to Hume to redeem his position, to make it not 'as radically dualistic as Descartes' doctrine', indeed in some ways very close to corporealism again. We are more at ease it seems in some sort of half-way house which shows that we have not forgotten the 'deliberate abusiveness' with which Ryle thought he had made an end of Descartes.

Mr O'Shaughnessy is certainly not half-hearted in the concessions he makes to what would normally be regarded as a dualist view. He is very explicit and open

When presented with a tightly packed argument, it is not easy, without a sense of unfairness, to avoid the sort of detail that would take us far beyond the length of an article. The risk must be taken. I shall therefore from this point concentrate on those aspects of Mr O'Shaughnessy's themes which seem to me to put his main submissions to the greatest strain.

In an extensive (pp. i-lxvi) introduction to the first volume O'Shaughnessy sets out for us his special concern with willing and, especially, with *bodily* action, not only because these are central issues in themselves but also, and primarily, because it is in bodily action that the inner world of thought and intention is most explicitly fused or 'bonded' with the world of nature such that these mental items are seen, in the ultimate account of them, to be themselves the brain. It is in this way that we have 'our commitment to the world' (p. xxxiv). It is in this way that there is 'a causally bonded circle that passes through mind and environment' (p. xxxv), 'a life line linking mind and world' (p. xxxix) whereby consciousness 'ramifies into wider horizons' (p. xxxvi). In bodily action the 'mind and body are incomparably wedded' (p. lv), so that 'the empire of the mind' 'spreads into nature, acting as a sort of colonising force' (p. lvii).

For this reason 'Epistemology takes second place to vitality' (p. xlv), the mind 'as vital', through bodily action as a 'physical-act mediator' is 'essentially tied to reality' (p. xlv) and provides in this way an 'index of our changing metaphysical theory of Man' (p. xlv). It is in this way also that 'a man can feel that he himself as a distinctive entity is likewise making his presence felt in the world' (p. liv). This is not to think of a man merely '*qua* physical entity' - ('it is he, and not *his body* that wills' (p. li), he is willing '*qua* owner of consciousness') and 'the psychic force is itself a *psychic* phenomenon', it is the man 'as spirit' (a word that is very deliberately chosen) 'but in such a way that it is not inter-substitutable with "his body" or "his mind" ' (p. li). We shall have to note this later.

O'Shaughnessy lays special emphasis in this way on our involvement with the world, our environment, and thus with one another. He inveighs much against the retreat into our own interiority, 'the pretence of "metaphysical immunity"' (p. xxxiii), the 'ageing interiorist conception' (xxxviii) that drives us into behaviourism, on the one hand, and enervating solipsism on the other, 'the headlong sceptical retreat into self and consciousness' (p. xxxiii). This has great relevance all round, but especially in art and literature (and, if *I* were making the point, I would add 'specially in religion'). This is also a most important aspect of 'our vitally founded commitment to reality' (p. xxxiv). It is 'peculiarly appropriate to our present era' and 'the royal road to anything worth the having' (p. xxxi).

I have some misgivings about the way the retreat in question came to its culmination in nineteenth century metaphysics, especially Absolute Idealism, and about the 'innocence' of Victorian attitudes to nature - 'the flight to nature'. Generalisations, though perhaps in order or even unavoidable to make a major point on occasion, are also very dangerous and often misleading. It is certainly strange to single out Bradley from other idealists, British or Continental or others, in exemplification of 'the diminished sense of reality' and 'the unwholesome relentless pride' that led to 'an estrangement from vital instinct' (p. xxxii) in nineteenth century

implicate of the sort of interiority to which he objects. There is no justification for this. Descartes had a problem of sorts on his hands in the so-called 'ego-centric predicament', but this came about largely because of the peculiar way in which he thought he had established his own existence and, even more perhaps when we look at it closely, because of his views about perception and the status of secondary qualities. We can correct this without any invoking of the veracity of God. The dualist does not suppose, and is in no way committed to supposing, that he must stay in a private windowless world of his own. He is aware of a world of nature, which is no mode of his own being, presented, over-against him, whether in the style of Berkeley or in a more outright realist form. Berkeley copes well enough for his purpose with subjectivism; and within an objective order of nature we have an easy and dependable means of communication.

This does not take the derided form of analogues to our own movements in the behaviour of others, or at least not initially and primarily so. Nor does it, as has been so often thought, require some independent initial and immediate access to the experience of others to establish the required correlation. It is mainly and essentially a matter of what seems most plausible and natural in the explanation of some of the things we observe in the world around us. This has been made clear so often of late that it is hard to find it so consistently overlooked. The familiar jibe of Professor Ryle that, on a Cartesian view, 'absolute solitude is the ineluctable destiny of the soul'⁶ has no foundation whatsoever in the work of Descartes or his followers. The ghost of solipsism is itself a ghost, and it has been laid so often that it is amazing how philosophers of today continue to be frightened of it. It is time they forgot it.

But let us resume our main thread of the way O'Shaughnessy himself establishes the bridgehead which is required, in his account, in the world of nature. He begins with a lively account of 'the logical limits of the will'. There is much to ponder here, and much about which I remain unconvinced. Among the logical limits are such things as 'keeping on being married', for while we can do much to sustain or enrich a marriage and also to bring it to an end, being married is as such a 'reflexion of the legal system that we possess' (vol. 1, p. 4). The order to keep on being married is a negative one, the marriage state itself not being 'a continuant in time'. I am not sure that 'being married' might not be otherwise construed if broken up into our attitudes from moment to moment and the sense, in these terms, of seeking a divorce and thereby not keeping on being married. Likewise it may seem preposterous to tell someone to keep on being in space – how could we help that any more than being finite? But suppose disembodied existence were possible, not in the form of 'out of the body' existence somewhere else, but in some way along the lines of what I outlined in the chapter on 'The world of thoughts alone' in my *The Self and Immortality*, or suppose there were something corresponding to space but not space itself (another 'dimension' or attribute in Spinoza's sense); and suppose it were possible, for some at least, to enter these states at will, it would then make sense to tell someone to do just that or not to do it. But I do not wish to deny that there are logical limits to the will. I only wish we were given better examples at the start, like willing to become (strictly) another person or God.

the moment. For, whether we think of belief as a live experience or as a disposition, it remains impossible to change what it is directly, though we can do much that may cause us, very quickly perhaps on occasion, to believe otherwise.

From this point the discussion accelerates and gets closer to its central theme. We are asked to consider the nature of bodily willing, contrasted for example with trying to remember or imaging; and we start with the question whether the body is bound to be the limit of such action. We certainly assume, for all normal purposes, that it is so. Not even in extreme peril would I will to leap across a wide chasm, and it never occurs to me, however busy, to will the book to come from the shelf to my hand. But is all this inherently impossible? On the face of it not. Fairy tales, and much talk of miracles, involve just that. There seems to be no problem about understanding what is meant. It is not like willing that I should have a new supply of square circles, or that this page should become black and white all over at the same time. I can understand quite well what it would be for a distant chair to rise into the air, or a book to come to my hand. Why is it that we must of necessity rule this out when I just will it?

My own view is that there just is no necessity here; the only necessity we have is that which is found within the system and the coherence of the concomitant variations we find in the way things are. We find in practice that we can move our bodies but that we never seem able to move anything else in the same way. It becomes futile to try, however great the need. We may, out of sheer desperation, on occasion try something we know 'in our hearts' we cannot accomplish, like leaping across too wide a gulf or dropping unhurt from a great height to the ground. Usually this is just impulsive action – anything rather than the flames. We know the limits of what we can do only too well, even if we may on occasion exceed our expectations; and we never think seriously of seeking to move or affect things in the world around us without first moving our bodies. Outside the body what we will is virtually always instrumental.

But is there any reason for this other than our own, and everybody else's, experience? Why should we try to accomplish what we find we can never do? It is just a waste of time and effort, and we become conditioned to think invariably in these terms. But is there more than that involved? We are certainly very sceptical when anyone claims to have supernormal powers of the kind noted. We will take a lot of convincing, for, as we might say, it just does not happen. We suspect fraud or some delusion. And yet, when seemingly sane and dependable and highly intelligent persons make such claims, what is our reaction? We just do not dismiss it all outright. There is already available a very vast body of thoroughly professional studies of such alleged para-normal phenomena. Psychical research is a respectable long established subject, and some very distinguished names are associated with it. Not all of this involves 'causation at a distance', in the familiar terms. But much of it does – even Mr Geller's fork did not bend under normal pressure, or so it was alleged.

Now we may have a strong inclination to dismiss many such claims out of hand. We assume they are silly, superstitious or fraudulent. But we do not usually take this

explanation...comes to an end' (vol. 1, p. 97). We fall foul of the 'bedrock usage' 'crystallized out in the remote past of our species' (vol. 1, p. 81).

These suppositions are linked up very closely to a further rather curious claim which discloses still further just where O'Shaughnessy wishes to take his stand. He holds that when we decide to do a physical act we *know* that we actually will do it. This is not 'merely surmised'. There is a '*knowledge of the future* that characteristically follows upon any firm decision to there and then execute an intention' – 'I would normally insist that I knew' (vol. 1, p. 93). If I am 'asked how I know I will raise my arm' I simply say 'Look, I just know' (vol. 1, p. 93). There is a very special '*absence of surprise* at the occurrence of the desired effect' (vol. 1, p. 92). This is centrally important for O'Shaughnessy's view, and we must therefore stress that the absence of surprise is not just that which we would all normally posit coming from our normal understanding of what we can actually do, and what it is therefore worth attempting to do. I am not in the least surprised when I normally get up to open the door to find that I can do so. I assume that, in my normal state of health, this is one of the many things I can do. There are some feats which would surprise me if I accomplished them, but walking about is not one of them. I can always do that if I am well.

But O'Shaughnessy wishes to insist that the knowledge of the future, involved in physical action, is very special, it is *immediate*. And thus, 'the absence of surprise is likewise not to be explained through appeal to evidential considerations. These characteristics are part of the concept of physical action' and are thus '*a priori* true' (vol. 1, p. 95). In this way, 'if I actually reach a firm decision to there and then raise my arm, then generally at that precise instant I come to know that I am going to raise my arm' (vol. 1, p. 95). But what is the force of 'generally' here, and how does it fit with the *a priori* character of the claim, and the admission that 'this (immediate) knowledge is so to say fallible knowledge, in as much as the motor apparatus can let us down'?

There seems to be a real Achilles' heel here. O'Shaughnessy is able to his own satisfaction at least, to get by with the proviso of my 'knowing that my arm and body are in working order' (vol. 1, p. 99). But how often, if ever, do we strictly know this? We may be struck with paralysis at any moment. The only way to avoid being surprised in that way would be to have the health of one's body exhaustively monitored from moment to moment, a feat which could hardly ever be properly accomplished. Most of the time at least we have only a strong presumption. In practice it seems always possible to set ourselves to do something and fail. So that all that O'Shaughnessy can properly claim is, not that we ever strictly know that we can do, in bodily action, what we decide to do, but that we can always be sure of this provided the bodily 'mechanism' is in working order; and that is something we know in an empirical and not an *a priori* way.

But what of the alleged *a priori* knowledge itself? How am I sure that, if my arm and body are in working order, I can raise my arm? We certainly do take this for granted, and with every justification. But is not that in itself in its turn, however confident (and rightly) we may be, an empirical matter also? It has always happened

logical analysis of 'He moved his head'; into 'His head moved' and 'He willed that' (or some such), and interpret these two sentences as asserting the occurrence of *distinct events*.⁷ Then noting that these two events (that are) asserted by (the complex) 'He moved his head' have different types of explanation, we recognise that to apply *both* explanatory types to the moving of the head would be tantamount to making the erroneous assumption that there exists an automatic explanatory transfer from the constituent events of a set of events onto that set itself. Thus, our explanatory troubles have been born of this simple confusion. Herewith, the problem vanishes: head movement has its physiological-type explanation; willing of head movement has its immediate mentalistic explanation; and moving the head can look after itself. And that is that.

O'Shaughnessy rejects 'this dissolution of the problem' (vol. 1, p. 111). I accept it. 'Moving the head can look after itself' may not be the best way to put it, but I have no quarrel with what is intended. We have no explanation beyond that supplied of the two distinct events, and that is what they plainly seem to be, other than noticing what happens, and its consistency. However tantalizing (or should we say 'wonderful?') that is just as far as we can get, call it (misleadingly) 'occult' 'magical' or what you will. It is the case, it is what, fortunately for our being the beings we are, that we find.

O'Shaughnessy is unhappy with it. It leaves us in the air. It explains nothing at the crucial point, there is this irreducible surd or 'datum' which is itself left unexplained.

Very well, then, let us go along with him. What explanation does he offer? Can he bridge the gap, or what? Ryle had long ago complained that the dualist most inadvertently had neglected to tell us anything about the purported 'transactions' between the alleged two distinct events of mental willing and the physical effect; and a host of the most influential writers on the subject have followed him in this question. Compare Passmore's observation that minds persuade, bodies push.⁸ If we leave it at that we seem to be throwing up the sponge where it is most important that some explanation should be forthcoming.

The quest becomes very exciting just here. Like the lively group in *The Republic* (Book IV, 432B) we are now closing in on our quarry in the thicket. What can O'Shaughnessy produce? He rejects behaviourism and all that goes with it. The psychological and mental are intact, the 'trying' is real and processive. It is an ongoing occurrent event in 'the novel' psychological domain; if there is an explanation of how the physiological event comes about, let us have it; we are agog, the mystery is to be unravelled at last.

Alas for these hopes. There are no 'transactions', no intermediary, and rightly so; for what could they be that would not, as Ryle indeed was not slow to point out, just push the problem further, with the almost certain postulation of mythical entities. But if, rightly, nothing of this sort is provided, what can the philosopher have in his hat for us? Alas, nothing other than the bold, in the light of much that seemed to be said to the contrary, defiant insistence that there just are not two distinct events here, they are one. 'After all, is it not certain that arm raising both encompasses arm rise and is itself a psychological event of the type of willing?' (vol. 1, p. 111). 'I do not oppose the efficacy of an agent and of the physical means he employs. On the contrary, I suppose them to be one' (vol. 1, p. 113). So that when the much vaunted requirement of explanation is pressed, and becomes urgent, what we are offered, and

This prescribes the treatment of further central and perplexing issues in the 'mind-body problem', the place, for example, of bodily feeling in our awareness and control of our bodies. For although it may be said of sensations, pain for example, that 'they feel as they feel' (vol. 1, p. 154), 'that no pain can exist without an owner, that any pain that anyone has cannot be had by another' (vol. 1, p. 154), it is far from being the case that 'All that is originally given is: feeling, feeling, feeling' (vol. 1, p. 155); this itself cannot be known as 'Just oneself and certain feelings' (vol. 1, p. 152); and the self which owns the feelings and the admitted 'givenness of the self to the self' 'is not the immediate givenness of some immaterial something to the self, e.g. a Transcendental Ego', it is 'the givenness to the self of that of which the material parts of the body are likewise material parts, viz. the material entity that is oneself' (vol. 1, p. 148). The feeling, pain in this example, although it 'feels as it feels', is also something we only know in its fullness as also physical reality and with its location 'set in the body where it is' (vol. 1, p. 155).

I am well aware that there is an awkward problem for dualists in the location of bodily feelings, such as pain. Some are apt to slough this off lightly on the basis of associations set up over the years, especially in infancy. But this is also a little hard to take. When I have a pain in my right toe I know at once that that is where I have it. It is not in my left toe or my thumb. But I could have exactly the same sort of pain in my left toe. The quality of the pain does not seem to have much, if anything, to do with where I find it to be or feel it — as O'Shaughnessy himself stresses. At the same time the pain seems to be firmly and exclusively something I feel. No one else can have it, and no one can observe it. The cause may be seen or perceived in some other way, but not the pain itself. This seems to be irremovably on the experiential side of the divide, however easy it may be to observe the swelling, the cut finger or whatever the doctor may note more precisely or his devices record.

It would be helpful if dualists addressed themselves to this problem with more of the ruthless precision with which O'Shaughnessy marshals his arguments. Even so I see no way in which the pain itself could be other than a private unextended sensation. And there, not too happily, I must leave it for now. But that is not to deny the importance of the elaborate mental and physiological framework (so well set out by O'Shaughnessy) in which the pain occurs. A bodily sensation is indeed 'putatively set in the body' (vol. 1, p. 164) and is part of a 'unitary whole' but not such as makes it itself in any way properly physical. That seems to go against all that we find it to be.

We return to the main theme, the crux in these studies, in the central parts of Volume 2. The distinctive nature of 'trying' or willing, its relation to desire, belief and sustained intention (and its irreducibility to them) are well set out. The impression may be left on the unwary at times that acts of will are the occasional isolated eruptions that Ryle lampooned. But this is just a hazard of the topic and in no way seriously intended. We will what we do all the time as we do it. But it is also firmly and consistently held that bodily action is one whole which essentially 'encompasses' indivisibly within itself the trying and the physical change. There is no action if my limbs are simply galvanized by some device affecting my nerves or my brain. There must be a trying. But neither is there any walking unless my legs move.

of all bodily acts *is* the ontological type of the most primitive and least garnished instance, viz. the subintentional act' (vol. 2, p. 200).

This disposes us all the more readily to the view that the physical movement as such is an actual ingredient in the physical action itself, that there is no ultimate divide within bodily action. This is precisely what O'Shaughnessy wants to maintain. He does speak in one place of 'a part event' – 'But kicking analyses into leg movement – and – whatever remains when leg movement is subtracted from kicking' (vol. 2, p. 208). One part event is 'psychological', the other 'non-psychological'. The kicking thus divides into two part-events, one (the leg movement) which is non-psychological and another 'earlier part' 'that is both psychological and non-identical with kicking' (vol. 2, p. 208). This idea of a 'part-event' (analogous, it is noted, to the way our progress half way into a skid is part of just one skid) (vol. 2, p. 287) seems to me to give much away. When one part-event is so different in nature from the other is it not more plausible to speak of two events?

I remain a little perplexed also about 'idle tongue movements' and the like, though much is made of them. They seem certainly different from the sort of things that go on in one's internal organs, a liver or kidney. But can we in any proper sense speak of them as actions, much less the revealing paradigm of what action really is?

Some recourse is had also to the effortfulness that is peculiarly marked in bodily striving – to drag a heavy object or push hard against a door that is stuck. But it seems to me that we must here also distinguish between the strain imposed upon the body as such and the strain on the person to persist in his 'trying' when this becomes unpleasant or painful. There can be intense mental efforts when little is involved in a physical way, as in a game of chess or solving a difficult problem 'in one's head'. Nor is this itself properly the effort of will as involved in persisting if we dislike this activity.

There certainly seems to be nothing in the nature of effortful physical activity to justify the claim which is central to the main theme of this book 'that the act of opening the door is the bodily act of giving a push that manages to cause door opening' (vol. 2, p. 102), or that basic (as distinct from instrumental) acts 'cannot be distinct from limb movements' (vol. 2, p. 103) – or 'event identity' (vol. 2, p. 105). It may be tautologically true, in one way, that 'the successful attempt *is* the doing of what one tried to do' (vol. 2, p. 100), but this in no way justifies equating the attempt with the successful outcome. Nor is it quite fair to put the alternative in the terms that 'the act of walking must cause the movement of the legs' (vol. 2, p. 128), much less involve this in the supposition that 'liftings', 'swimmings', etc. 'must take place exclusively in the brain' (vol. 2, p. 128). The trouble with all this is the initial persistent assumption that we have in such cases only one event which 'encompasses' the trying and the bodily effects, these being 'bonded together in the one event'. Yet this remains the vital issue around which everything else revolves.

What we have therefore is 'one intrinsically essentially active event' and a firm refusal 'to drive a causal wedge between the act of will and the willed phenomenon'. 'The act of the will *is* the voluntary bodily action', giving us thus 'a dual-aspect theory' (vol. 2, p. 264). At all costs we must avoid 'the major vice of introducing a

resourcefulness of the highest philosophical grade should be committed to so forlorn an enterprise. Might it not be wiser now to abandon the attempt and, bravely admitting that in essential matters on this topic Descartes was right, set these gifts of presentation and imaginative insight to the exciting creative philosophical tasks that open out for us once this important shift is effectively made?

References

- 1 Reproduced from *Religious Studies*, Vol. 18, 1982 pp. 379–97.
- 2 *The Will: A Dual Aspect Theory*, by Brian O'Shaughnessy (Cambridge University Press 1980), Vol. 1, pp. lxvi + 259; vol. 2, xxiii + 368. Price £52.
- 3 'Desire, Intentional Content and Teleological Explanation', Andrew Woodfield, *Proc. Arist. Soc.* Vol. 1981–2, p. 69.
- 4 J. Foster, 'In Self-Defence', in *Perception and Reality*, Essays in Honour of Professor Sir Alfred Ayer, edited by G. F. Macdonald (Macmillan 1979), p. 162. For my own discussion of this see chapter 7 of my *The Elusive Self*.
- 5 See my H. B. Acton Lecture on 'Solitude in Literature and Philosophy', published by the Royal Institute of Philosophy, together with other lectures on Philosophy and Literature given in the session 1981–82. cf. chapter 8 above.
- 6 *The Concept of Mind*, p. 15.
- 7 My italics.
- 8 Chapter III of John Passmore, *Philosophical Reasoning*, cf. chapter V of my *The Elusive Mind*.

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